



# Bereaved Parents of the USA Anne Arundel County Chapter

SEPTEMBER 2015

COPYRIGHT © 2015 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

## Bereaved Parents National Gathering

By Carol Tomaszewski, Chapter Leader,

My husband Rick and I went to the BP/USA National Gathering this year. I found it to be an intensely healing weekend, which left me fairly drained, and yet full of hope and encouragement.

The speakers were inspiring with their messages. Many of them have written books, poems, and songs; have websites and facebook; have set up foundations; and are promoting changes in education and laws. Their messages of how they have incorporated their child's legacy in their lives made me realize that each of us faces that challenge. And if we are to move forward with our lives after the tragedies we have endured, we must do so with our child in our hearts and souls.

Following are some of the thoughts and points of interest that I noted during the Gathering.

- You can not heal what you can not feel.
- I wouldn't have wasted my breath on saying goodbye, rather I would have said "I love you."
- Hurt; Hope; Help; Honor; Healing – By doing the first 4 you will find the 5<sup>th</sup>.
- We're all just walking each other home.
- You can't always choose what happens to you, but you can choose how you react.
- Love, Honor, Celebrate our children
- Say their names – order take-out in their name; make donations in their name
- Bereaved yet Blessed
- Where we focus our energy is where we live
- You have to find out who you are after your loss
- Self care is important
- Open your heart to create a spiritual relationship with your child

*Continued on page 2.*

***Save the Date!***

***Memory Walk on  
October 3rd, 2015***

***Details on Page 14.***

Sponsorship of this newsletter has been made by the following family:

Holly and Alli Enders

In memory of their daughter

**Christine Kelly Enders**

**September 26, 1986 — October 15, 2008**

Dearest Christy, Happy 29th Birthday! We miss you each day you have been gone from here, but we carry you with us now in our hearts wherever we go! Until we meet again, baby cakes, we will celebrate your life's memories in our special ways. All our Love, Mom, Dad, and Drew XOXO



*Continued from page 1.*

- Do something that relates to both you and your child
- Gratitude will shift the chemicals in your brain
- Morph from Bereaved Parent to Intentional Survivor
- A father and mother each lost a different child, in their eyes.
- Notice what makes you happy and practice smiling.
- Take all the time you need to grieve....just don't get sucked into the black hole.
- Find time to let grief pour through you, and time to let it go.
- Do what you need to do to get back to the love.

The most important aspect of the Gathering for me, was that all the organizers, speakers and helpers were making an effort to help all the attendees by telling their stories and how they are moving forward, or offering words of compassion, or simply just doing all those little things necessary to keep things running smoothly. And through helping others, it was obvious that they are helping themselves. The whole weekend was truly inspiring and encouraging. I left there with hope in my heart, and assurance that I do not walk alone.



*Opening Ceremony, Jodi Norman,  
BP/USA Vice President*



*Music and Grief workshop, Alan Pedersen &  
Paul Balasic  
(Anne Arundel County Chapter, BP/USA)*

### Forgotten Grievors—The Duality of Grieving Staring into the void by the death of a grandchild.

By Al Martinez, from: [AARP VIVA](#), April 2007

It is one of those perfect autumn days of sunshine and balanced temperatures, neither too hot nor too cold. Not a breeze stirs through the cul-de-sac of this quiet Los Angeles neighborhood, where Pinney and Ilean Kanter sit at a kitchen table and remember their granddaughter Elisa.

While the day glows with promise, Ilean's eyes fill with tears. Pinney, a retired aerospace engineer, is tense with emotional pain as they talk about Elisa, a bright and active 13-year-old, who died suddenly of an undetected heart ailment last June. "He never breaks out in tears," Ilean says of her husband of 53 years, "but I know that he is crying inside. I know what he's thinking. It's in his voice."

*Continued on next page.*

*Continued from previous page.*

Elisa was their only grandchild. The Kanters babysat her as an infant, took her on trips as a little girl and opened their home to her as she grew into a teenager. One moment she was alive and seemingly healthy, a straight-A student and an accomplished writer and musician, just three days away from a trip to Israel—and the next moment she was gone. The suddenness of her death intensified the loss. When she died, the world they knew evaporated.

"I went to the hospital and rubbed her arm," Ilean remembers, sobbing softly. "I kissed her three times. I couldn't believe it. I still can't. I'll never get over it."

In the days following Elisa's death, the Kanters helped Elisa's parents—their daughter, Debbie, and their son-in-law, Leslie—experience their own grief. They cried together, Ilean says, her eyes brimming with remembered tears, and talked about the love and joy that Elisa brought into their lives. Ilean and Pinney listened while the parents talked, emptying themselves of the sadness that filled their new loneliness.

"We supported Debbie by just being there," Ilean says. "What else could we do? I took her shopping, anything she wanted. I tried to make her laugh when we talked about Elisa. She was the sweetest kid you'll ever meet—when she was a little girl she called the escalator the alligator..."

As Ilean talks, a small terrier named Daisy that they bought for Elisa curls up on the floor near them, a reminder of the little girl they had helped raise.

Now, still less than a year after Elisa's death, the Kanters, both in their 80s, continue to deal with their own grief a day at a time.

Ilean makes it a point to talk with Debbie on the telephone once or twice a day. Elisa becomes a living presence when they reminisce about her, Ilean says. "Debbie feels cheated and so do I. Why did God take her so soon? I tell Debbie how lonesome I am. I don't want to upset her, but it's the way we both feel. She must know that she isn't the only one suffering."

Indeed, grandparents often are the forgotten grievers. Standing in the background, trying to be strong for their own son or daughter, grandparents are called upon to play the difficult role of parents to their grieving children, while also staring into the void left by the death of a grandchild. How should they act? What should they say to a son or daughter who has just lost the most precious possession?

"The death of a grandchild ranks high on the scale of human grief—but it is rarely acknowledged," writes Helen Fitzgerald, training director for the American Hospice Foundation, in an online essay. "Grandparents are usually left to cope as best they can." The death seems out of order, she adds, and forces them to confront their own mortality. Why didn't they die first? Who will now carry on the family name? "The loss," Fitzgerald writes, "resonates through the generations."

Even when the lost grandson or granddaughter is a young adult, their deaths are no less tragic. "It's still the loss of a loved one, and the pain is still as great," says Dr. Lillian Carson, grandmother of six and author of *The Essential Grandparent: A Guide to Making a Difference*.

### Next Meeting: Thursday, September 3, 2015 at 7:30 p.m.


The speaker for the September meeting is Margo Murray. She is a certified yoga and meditation instructor, trained at the Himalayan Institute. She will speak on the benefits of yoga and meditation in healing.

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

Sharing groups, a key part of each Chapter meeting, will be held as desired for first-time attendees, and the newly and non-newly bereaved. **Meetings are held on the first Thursday of every month beginning at 7:30 p.m. and are open to anyone grieving the death of a child. Come around to the back of the church -- there is parking and an entrance directly into our meeting room. Doors open at 7:15 p.m.**

We are a **self-help support organization** dedicated to assisting parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and siblings toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child. We provide information and education to extended family and friends. 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.

**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. Sometimes we schedule a 30-minute presentation at the beginning of our meeting. When the speaker or panel has concluded the presentation, we introduce ourselves and say our child's name. We then take a short break before dividing into sharing groups. 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—focus on the issues facing participants today.

Submissions for the September newsletter are due to the Newsletter Team by September 10th.  
 Send an email to: [newsletter@aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org](mailto:newsletter@aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org).

Chapter Leader: Carol Tomaszewski,  
[chapterleaderaacountymd@gmail.com](mailto:chapterleaderaacountymd@gmail.com)

Newsletter Team:

June Erickson & Katie Redmiles

Treasurer: Fran Palmer

Hospitality: Tawny Stitely

Librarian: Bob and Sandi Burash

Programs: Mary Redmiles  
[mary.redmiles@gmail.com](mailto:mary.redmiles@gmail.com)

#### **Do You Use Amazon.com?**

If you enter Amazon through our Chapter's website ([www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org](http://www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org)), the Chapter will earn a commission of 5% on your purchases. Using the link does not increase your cost (and information about your purchase is not shared with the Chapter). It's an easy way to support our Chapter's activities. Go to the Chapter's home page, click on the butterfly on the welcome page, and scroll down the first page to the bottom where there is an Amazon.com graphic that takes you to Amazon's site. Entering Amazon's site through the Chapter's website credits the Chapter with the 5% commission on any purchases that follow. Thanks in advance for your help!

Would you like to **sponsor the Chapter's newsletter or website** ([www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org](http://www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org)) for one month in memory of your child? It's a wonderful way to honor your child's memory – to say his or her name for all the world to hear -- while providing financial support to the Chapter and its many activities offered to all those mourning the loss of a child. Newsletter sponsorship is \$75 and website sponsorship is \$25. Just send an email to Mary Redmiles ([mary.redmiles@gmail.com](mailto:mary.redmiles@gmail.com)) or call her at 410-721-6671, or sign up at a monthly meeting. Say Their Names!!! And help the Chapter, too!

REPRINT POLICY: Material in this newsletter of the Anne Arundel County Chapter/ BPUSA may be copied only: 1) if the article is copied in its entirety; 2) if the person writing the article is identified as noted in the newsletter; 3) if it is clearly stated that it was taken from the newsletter of the Anne Arundel County Chapter/ BPUSA; 4) if our website is cited in the credits. This material is to be used and given to help persons with the grieving process and may not be sold or become a part of something being sold for profit, unless first obtaining the permission of the author of the article and/or the current Editor or Chapter leader as noted in this newsletter.



## Willie Nelson Sings Heartbreaking Song with His Son Before His Tragic Passing

On **Christmas Day of 1991**, Willie Nelson and his family suffered a great loss that shocked the country music world. Willie's eldest son, **William Hugh Nelson, Jr. (Billy)**, had passed away.

*"I've never experienced anything so devastating in my life"* Willie said to a friend (via [People.com](http://People.com)).



Before his sudden passing, Willie and his son had recorded a beautiful gospel song together, **"My Body's Just A Suitcase For My Soul"**. Billy was planning to release a gospel album, and feature the collaboration song on the album. After this devastating loss, Willie had a hard time completing the album.

But, in **1994**, Willie honored his son by releasing the gospel album, *Peace In The Valley*. The album included the father/son duet, the heart-wrenching song, **"My Body's Just A Suitcase For My Soul"**. In an interview with [Sun Sentinel](http://Sun Sentinel), Bob MacDonald Jr. (of Promised Land Music) said, *"It was very tough for Willie. He had doubts about coming out with this album at all. But now that the record is out, it seems to be helping him to come to grips with the tragedy."*

The album was re-released in 2015, and broke our hearts all over again.

We can't even begin to imagine how hard this time must have been for Willie, but we're so happy he was able to find some peace by honoring his son through their music.

Check out the video to see Willie and his son, Billy, singing the emotional song **"My Body's Just A Suitcase For My Soul"** and you'll be brought to tears: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2iMupp\\_99g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2iMupp_99g)

### LYRICS:

Blind man playing the blues,  
Down on the corner of the street.  
Skin like Juarez leather,  
Teeth like old piano keys.  
Businessmen walk by him, And quickly look away,  
They don't know he was a hero, back in '68.  
They don't know when he was younger,  
He dreamed dreams much like their own.  
'Till fighting for their freedom,  
Left him in darkness all alone.  
But in the anger of their shadows,  
Where empty anthems ring,  
He found the light of truth in this song he sings.  
My body's just a suitcase for my soul,  
My body's just a suitcase for my soul.  
When my last breath is drawn, I'll unpack  
and ramble on,

And play my blues down on those streets of gold.  
My body's just a suitcase for my soul.  
His eyes are closed, his head bends low,  
Then upwards to the sky. He dreams and  
sings of simple things,  
That money cannot buy.  
I'm glad I stopped to listen, for that blind man  
made me see,  
That life's most precious treasures still lie  
ahead of me.  
My body's just a suitcase for my soul,  
My body's just a suitcase for my soul.  
When my last breath is drawn, I'll unpack and  
ramble on,  
And play my blues down on those streets of gold.  
My body's just a suitcase for my soul.

## Our Children Remembered

Jon Russell Aikin  
Grandson of Elizabeth and Barry  
Aikin  
September 4, 1983 - November 19,  
2001

Mariah Nicole Albee  
Daughter of Valerie and Richard  
Albee  
November 27, 1982 - September 7,  
2012

Traci Lynn Boone  
Daughter of Bonita  
Boone-Adamecz  
September 17, 1964 - August 17,  
1986

Allison (Alli) Leigh Cantrell  
Daughter of Kristy Cantrell  
January 19, 1982 - September 5,  
2014

Jacquelyn D. Connolley  
Daughter of Pat Donoho  
October 3, 1969 - September 13,  
1986

O. Steven Cooper  
Cousin of Frances Palmer  
July 5, 1954 - September 26, 1998

Dayden Alexander Dunn  
Grandson of Beverley and Wayne  
Dunn  
September 12, 2006 - June 1, 2008

Jason T. Easter  
Son of Janice and Chris Kunkel  
January 30, 1973 - September 9,  
1999

Christine Kelly Enders  
Daughter of Holly and Alli Enders  
September 26, 1986 - October 15,  
2008

Cynthia Lynn Ferguson  
Daughter of Doris and Charles  
Clair  
September 4, 1952 - March 28,  
2010

Jeffrey Andrew Grimm  
Son of John and Linda Grimm  
November 25, 1973 - September  
28, 1989

Kerry Elizabeth Hambleton  
Daughter of Bob and Ellen  
Hambleton  
September 14, 1983 - July 26,  
2011

Matthew James Katz  
Son of Bob and Sue Katz  
March 13, 1982 - September 7,  
2003

Nicholas Paul Liberatore  
Son of Larry and Pat Liberatore  
September 27, 1980 - June 9,  
1997

Cody Thomas Moczulski  
Son of Robin Moczulski  
September 19, 1993 - June 13,  
2010

Robert Adam "Robby" Ostrowski  
Son of Denise Crouse  
January 30, 1995 - September  
11, 2010

Scott Thomas Palmer  
Son of Frances Palmer  
Grandson of Ethel Cleary  
August 3, 1983 - September 1,  
1996

Sarah Elizabeth Patterson  
Daughter of Cindy Patterson  
June 28, 1987 - September 19,  
2006

John Christopher Poe  
Son of Sharon and Ben  
Poe  
October 12, 1967 -  
September 24, 2001

Steven Craig Rasmussen  
Son of Robert and Linda  
Rasmussen  
July 15, 1961 - September  
24, 1997

Robert William Rey II  
Friend of Peggy Smeltzer  
September 14, 1965 -  
October 2, 2003

Nathaneal Paul Rohan  
Son of Andi Zolt  
October 2, 1983 - Septem-  
ber 14, 2013

James Ryan Rohrbaugh  
Son of Doug and Donna  
Rohrbaugh  
August 30, 1983 -  
September 5, 1983

Daniel Maurice Rothman  
Son of Juliet and Leonard  
Rothman  
January 20, 1971 -  
September 17, 1992

Michael Edward Shannon  
Son of Karen Shannon  
September 10, 1965 -  
August 13, 2013

Thomas "Tommy" Richard  
Short  
Son of Karen Short  
September 25, 1997 -  
October 16, 1997

*This is for all the caterpillars that never became butterflies. All the butterflies that never caught the wind in their wings. And all the hearts that had hopes and dreams of a wondrous flight together.*

## Our Children Remembered

Deonte Joseph Simms  
Grandson of Deborah Simms  
October 1, 1981 - September 9, 2001

Owen Robert Sinex  
Son of Phyllis and Bob Sinex  
September 2, 1993 -  
December 20, 2012

David William Tomaszewski  
Son of Richard and Carol Tomaszewski  
September 4, 1974 - February 6, 2001

Timothy Allen Umbel  
Son of Richard and Mary Ann Umbel  
February 16, 1982 - September 15, 2002

Robert Matthew White  
Son of Kathleen Savage  
September 20, 1972 - November 13, 1993

Jeffrey Kevin Withers  
Son of Jan Withers  
July 30, 1975 - September 28, 1975

Miriam Luby Wolfe  
Daughter of Larry and Rosemary Mild  
September 26, 1968 - December 21, 1988

Ashley Jayné Younger  
Daughter of Stephanie Younger  
October 12, 1990 - September 28, 2008

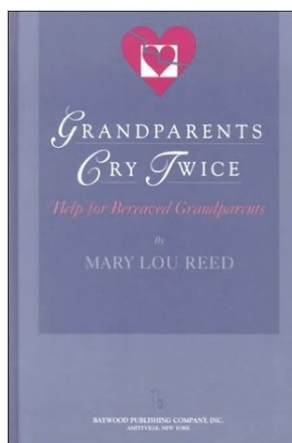
Sienna Blue Water Zertuche  
Daughter of Karen Samaras  
September 5, 1976 - July 31, 2008

*This is for all the caterpillars that never became butterflies. All the butterflies that never caught the wind in their wings. And all the hearts that had hopes and dreams of a wondrous flight together.*

### Book Review

#### Grandparents Cry Twice: Help for Bereaved Grandparents

By Mary Lou Reed



*Grandparents Cry Twice: Help for Bereaved Grandparents* is a book about grandparents' dual sorrow when a grandchild dies. They cry for their lost grandchild and they also cry for the terrible grief they see their own child having to bear. The author, Mary Lou Reed, writes of her experiences when her beloved grandson, Alex, died. Through her personal story she touches the universal in all grandparents' grief.

### National Grandparents Day Sunday, September 13, 2015

Remembering Grandparents who have lost a grandchild. Grandparents Day is recognized yearly on the first Sunday after Labor Day. This day is symbolized by the Forget-Me-Not Flowers.



## One Less Second Grader

August 27, 2014 by [Angela Miller](#)

Signs of back to school are everywhere.

For some parents it might be a relief. Summer is over, and the school schedule is a welcome change.

For bereaved parents, signs of torture are everywhere. Over-sized backpacks, school supplies, car drop off and pick up lines. It's a sucker punch to the gut. Everywhere you look there are painful reminders of what you're missing. Reminders of what could have, should have been.

Reminders of what will *never* be.

It's too much sometimes. By sometimes I mean almost always. But it's especially much too much right now.

It's hard to stay "positive" in the face of back to school. You grin and bear it, but people— don't be fooled. Behind every smile there is a floodgate of tears threatening to tsunami you at any given moment.

Everything you wish would be is not. And the truth of that burns. It burns new holes in you. It burns holes in the old places that you thought you'd lovingly repaired.

It aches in places you didn't know could ache. It screams a scream that reminds you of the wretched moment your life changed forever. Irreversibly.

This is the truth of being a bereaved parent. Milestones like this rip open your scabs all over again.

And you *bleed*....

Today should be my son's first day of second grade. He would be *eight*.

Instead he is dead.

Instead, my Facebook feed is overflowing with the smiling, happy faces of my son's friends: another year older. Another year. His friends who look nothing like my baby still looks in my mind. Over-sized backpacks, toothy grins. Some with over-sized backpacks sans smiles.

And for us? Over-sized sadness and an ache that never leaves.

I try to imagine what it would be like to have just one picture of my son starting school. Just one picture. A toothy grin, or a scowl. Blurry or in focus— I'd take it. I long for just one school picture. One picture that I'll never get. Kindergarten, or preschool, one from first or second grade. Even if he never would've made it to second grade— I'd have taken that too. At least that would have given us six more blessed, sacred years with him. Six more years to watch him grow older.

Every time I see a new back-to-school picture I sob. Sob. Sob.

My friends don't know this because they don't ask. Six years out few remember anymore. My son's name is a distant memory on most people's lips. A distant thought in their minds. He's been gone far too long to stay in the present. Especially in the frenzy of back to school. Life moves at warp speed. But for a bereaved parent time stands still.

*Continued on next page.*





*Continued from previous page.*

We stand with one foot in the life we *had* and one foot in the life we *have*. With an aching heart often stuck in *what could have, should have been*. We straddle time and space.

It's hard to live like that.

My son's name is the song of my heart.  
The sound of my heartbeat. He is my *raison d'être*.

It hurts that people forget that today one second grade classroom is missing one very special little boy. One less second grader. It hurts that an entire school day will happen today without anyone realizing someone was missing. It hurts that the world goes on without skipping a beat. Without calling. Or sending a card. Or saying his name.

Today might be just a tad bit more *bearable* if one person would take the time to remember. Just a simple, *Hey Angela, I wanted to let you know I remember. I remember and my heart aches with yours. I'm sorry your baby isn't starting second grade today like he should be. I'm sorry you didn't get to walk your three sons to school today. I'm so sorry.*

People forget.

A mother *never* forgets.

First time back-to-school moms tell me of their sadness. And I get it. Sending your child off to school is emotional. How is it possible they are *already* another year older?! They grow up *so fast*.

I have two other children of my own. I get it. I really do. But I want to scream to these parents – **YOU ARE SO LUCKY!!!! YOU ARE SO BLESSED TO SEND YOUR CHILD OFF TO SCHOOL. YOU ARE SO BLESSED TO WATCH YOUR CHILD GROW ANOTHER YEAR OLDER!!!!**

You are so blessed to cry these sad back to school tears.

Some of us aren't so lucky. Or blessed. Or whatever you want to call it. In fact, *many* of us aren't. We feel the weight of it every day, and some days, like back-to-school day, it *crushes* us all over again.

Now please don't get me wrong. I'm not negating that the sadness of moms sending their kids to school is *real*. I know it's real. Many of these moms are my dear friends, my sisters from another mother. And I listen to them with compassion, and I feel every bit of their sadness with them.

I just wish I could feel *that* kind of sadness too.

I wish I didn't belong to the *other* moms' club. The one no one wants to join. The one no one can ever leave.

I want to be sad in the same way the other moms are sad. I want to cry those moms' tears. *Not the forever-hole-in-my-heart-because-he'll-never-go-to-school kind of tears.*

Bereaved parents have been robbed of a lifetime of these precious milestones. Milestones that should be celebratory are instead like salt in an open wound.

*Continued on next page.*

PUTTING **GRIEF** INTO WORDS IS FUTILE,  
AND TRYING TO DO SO WOULD **BANKRUPT**  
THE **VOCABULARY** OF ALL LANGUAGES.

MARK TWAIN ON THE **DEATH** OF HIS  
DAUGHTER **SUZY CLEMENS**

*Continued from previous page.*

A wound that never fully heals.

I would give both my arms and legs to get to experience the unique sadness of sending my son off to his first day of second grade. In fact, I would give my *whole life* to experience it for just *one minute*. Just one minute longer is always and forever the cry of a bereaved mama's heart.

If only I could have walked him hand in hand to his teacher's classroom today.

If only I could have been annoyed by the lengthy back-to-school shopping list.

If only I could have written this facebook post: *Just dropped off my baby for his first day of second grade. Where did the time go?!!!*

If only I could have read responses beneath his adorable picture: *OMG, when did he get SO big?!! He is sooooo adorable, Angela.*

If only I could have hugged him at the end of his first day.

If only I could have tucked him in tonight and listened to the sweet song of him telling me all about his day.

If only I could have.

If only I could.

*If only.*

*Angela Miller is a mother of three, two she holds in her arms, and one she forever holds in her heart. She writes candidly about child loss and grief at [A Bed For My Heart](#) and elsewhere. Her first book, *You Are the Mother of All Mothers* is available on her website.*

---

### Finding Myself

---

Grief Toolbox / August 14, 2015

I am trying to find myself.

From the outside in.

My life, my spirit and soul be fulfilled,

Although there is an empty place where my heart once was.

This emptiness is unlike any other feeling I have ever had.

I know my heart beats but I do not feel anything,

I know my heart beats as it dreadfully keeps me alive.

My life is empty and aching for what I can not have,

Yet it is filled for what I have been given.

It is filled from having the chance to know you,

For being able to be in your presence,

For being able to see your spirit and glow affected so many.

Your spirit is what keeps me going.

To honor you in everything I do.

Your strength is what keeps my heart beating.

To be a better me, to be a strong individual as you are.

To find myself as a strong spirit.

To find myself and to let myself love again.

To find myself and let my heart beat freely with no regrets

## Scripting Our Own Paths After the Death of Our Children

---

by [David Roberts](#) on Monday, August 17, 2015 / Open to Hope, with permission.

*My sincere and heartfelt thanks to both Susan Roback and Patty Furino for inspiring much of the content for this post.*

### Deepening Bonds and Linking Objects

The relationship that I continue to share with my daughter Jeannine following her death in 2003 has on most days, allowed me to embrace a peaceful perspective. As part of our ongoing relationship, she has regularly communicated signs of her presence. In the beginning, I longed for signs because the pain of her physical absence was unbearable. Today I still welcome signs from my daughter but no longer rely on them. Jeannine makes her presence known when I need it most or simply when she desires contact with me. I also know that I can communicate with her anytime and engage in activities that allow me to deepen the continuing bond that we share. I can also recall positive memories of the father-daughter relationship that I shared with Jeannine; by simply looking at a physical object associated with those memories. What follows is my experience with one such object and what it taught me about my relationship with my daughter.

### “Your Jeep Stinks”

Dennis Klass, Ph.D and author of [The Spiritual Lives of Bereaved Parents](#), defines linking objects as “physical objects that seem to contain the child’s presence.”

#### *My linking object to Jeannine*

When Jeannine was approximately fifteen, she insisted that we go to our local auto store and buy an air freshener for the vehicle that I had owned at the time. Jeannine even offered to pay for it. When I asked her why, she simply replied: “Your jeep stinks.” She picked out an air freshener that she liked and that I ended up buying with my own money. I am sure Jeannine offered to pay for it initially it because she knew that without some incentive, I wouldn’t have gotten one.



Shortly after Jeannine’s death I found the air freshener in my garage. I thought it disappeared after I traded in my vehicle. The universe wanted me to find this item because it was another reminder of the wonderful relationship we shared during the 18 years she was alive. Today I can still hold the air freshener or simply visualize it and vividly recall the events of that day. I can tell you, for example, where we were standing in the store, the physical features of the clerk that waited on us, and that it was summer. Jeannine always comes alive through the story associated with that air freshener.

### Empowering Ourselves

Continuing bonds are a common, healthy, and enduring element in the resolution of grief. – Dennis Klass et al. 1996

*Continued on next page.*

*Continued from previous page.*

The death of our children is one of the most disempowering events we will ever experience. In the aftermath, we can choose to empower ourselves by consciously engaging in activities that deepen the bond with our children. Here are some suggestions:

Find an item that reminds you of your child. If it is a blanket, wrap yourself in it, or cologne or perfume, spray yourself with it. Whatever item you choose, find a quiet space and time and invite your child to spend some time with you. Reflect on the great times that you shared and wish to share in your new relationship.

Light a candle or burn some incense. Look at a photo album, or photos that you have on your computer. They can be pictures of friends, family, or pets. Share your specific memories of those photos with your children quietly or out loud, whatever works for you.

Take a walk in nature or a leisurely drive. Bring your child's picture or your unique linking object with you. Allow the positive memories to flow.  
Choose an activity that reflects the relationship that you shared with your child when he/she was alive.

Be aware of what you experienced. Did you have a sense of peace, a chill or chills or discover other evidence of your child's presence?

### **Coming Under Scrutiny**

You will find that certain individuals will question or scrutinize how you choose to transform your grief. They may believe that ongoing life long relationships with our deceased children are somehow unhealthy or even pathological. They may simply not understand.

Don't let anyone script your path, don't let anyone take your power away from you.

Jeannine's favorite Disney character was Tigger because he bounced and was the only one. Our children were all Tiggers, bouncing to their own rhythm and sharing their own unique gifts with those who were fortunate enough to cross their paths. As you embrace the notion of continuing bonds in transforming your grief, be Tigger and bounce down your path any way that you see fit. As long as you aren't hurting yourself or others in the process, it is all good.

It is crucial that individuals experiencing catastrophic loss support and witness each other's process of transformation, so that we can learn from each other, in the aftermath of catastrophic loss.

Those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music-  
Frederick Nietzsche.

*David J. Roberts, LMSW, became a parent who experienced the death of a child, after his daughter Jeannine died of cancer on 3/1/03 at the age of 18. He is a retired addiction professional and is also an adjunct professor in the psychology department at Utica College, Utica, New York.*



### Chapter Notes: Upcoming Meetings & Announcements

#### Angel Gown / Tu-Tu Projects

Does anyone have storage space for about 30 Angel Gowns? If you do, please contact June Erickson at [JuneErickson@aol.com](mailto:JuneErickson@aol.com)

Here are pictures from the Tu-Tu gathering last month. Thank you Tawny Stitely.



#### September Chapter Meeting – Thursday, September 3, 2015

7:30 p.m. at Calvary United Methodist Church, 301, Rowe Blvd., Annapolis, MD

The speaker for the Sept. meeting is Margo Murray. She is a certified yoga and meditation instructor, trained at the Himalayan Institute. She will speak on the benefits of yoga and meditation in healing. Just to be clear she is not a Grief specialist and will not be speaking specifically about grief. I believe she will guide us through a short lesson on meditation.

---

## Chapter Notes: Upcoming Meetings & Announcements

---

### **Newsletter Submissions – by September 10, 2015**

If anyone has a story to tell, a poem to share, a bereavement book they read, an upcoming grief conference, a photo they took of an event, or an article they thought was particularly helpful in their grief journey, please pass them on to others through our Newsletter. These personal submissions will make the newsletter more interesting for everyone. NOTE: All submissions should be made by the 10th of each month for the following month's newsletter. That includes those sponsoring the newsletter in memory of their child. Sponsorship submissions should include a photo, poem/saying, parents' name, child's full name, birthday and angel date. Please email all of these directly to [JuneErickson@aol.com](mailto:JuneErickson@aol.com).

### **October Chapter Meeting – Thursday, October 1, 2015**

7:30 p.m. at Calvary United Methodist Church, 301, Rowe Blvd., Annapolis, MD  
We will have speaker discussing Sibling Grief.

### **13<sup>th</sup> Annual Memory Walk – Saturday, October 3, 2015**

The Anne Arundel County Chapter of the BPUSA will host the 13th annual Memory Walk on Saturday, October 3, 2015 at the Quiet Waters Park in Annapolis. This 2-mile walk is to remember our children who died too soon, but still live on in our hearts. This is a wonderful event that brings some peace and comfort to our hearts. We use this event to raise money to help with various chapter projects and other events by getting sponsors for our walk. But you do not need sponsors, or even to walk, to participate, you can come just for the fellowship. There will be more information in emails and on the website. If you would like to help with this event, Please email Barbara Bessling at [aacountymemorywalk@gmail.com](mailto:aacountymemorywalk@gmail.com). Also, if you would like your child's photo to be posted, please let us know using the same email address, so we can make sure we have it. Memory Walk Forms are included at the back of this newsletter. Hope to see you there!

### **November Chapter Meeting – Thursday, November 5, 2015**

7:30 p.m. at Calvary United Methodist Church, 301, Rowe Blvd., Annapolis, MD  
Speaker to be announced.

### **Core Group Meeting – Tuesday, November 10, 2015**

7:00 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Calvary United Methodist Church, 301, Rowe Blvd., Annapolis, MD  
Anyone who can help out with the December Memorial Service, please attend.

### **December Chapter Meeting – Thursday, December 3, 2015**

7:30 p.m. at Calvary United Methodist Church, 301, Rowe Blvd., Annapolis, MD  
We will have our 'Introducing Our Children' evening, through pictures and stories of our children, and gifts to be donated in their memory.

## Chapter Notes: Upcoming Meetings & Announcements

### Annual Service of Remembrance – Sunday, December 6, 2015

3 p.m. at St. Martin's-in-the-Field Episcopal Church, 375 Benfield Road, Severna Park, Maryland 21146. Since its beginning in 1985, the Anne Arundel County Chapter's Annual Service of Remembrance has provided an opportunity for parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts and uncles, and friends to remember our precious children. Please join us in this celebration of our children's lives as we face the Holiday Season with Love, Compassion, and Hope for all. The Service is normally held on the first Sunday in December.

### In Loving Memory Conference – April 7 to April 10, 2016

"Finding your Lifeline", Hyatt Fairfax Hotel, Fairfax, Virginia

This four-day conference is for bereaved parents who have lost their only child or all their children. Grandparents, bereaved parent support group chapter leaders, friends and the professionals, who assist parents in walking through their grief, are also encouraged to attend. Mark your calendars now as this is the only Conference that focuses **entirely** on the needs of parents who have no surviving children. Kay Bevington, from Alive Alone will be participating, as will many other speakers and workshops to be announced. Register at <http://www.inlovingmemoryconference.org/>



### Bereaved Parents of the USA 2016 National Gathering

June 29 – July 3, 2016

*"Crossroads of Your Heart"*

Wyndham Indianapolis West, 2544 Executive Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46241

### 39<sup>th</sup> TCF National Conference

July 8 – 10, 2016

*"Hope Rises on the Wings of Love"*

The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that Scottsdale, Arizona, will be the site of the 39th TCF National Conference on July 8-10, 2016. "Hope Rises on the Wings of Love" is the theme of next year's event, which promises more of this year's great national Conference experience. The 2016 Conference will be held at the The Fairmont Scottsdale Princess. We'll keep you updated with details here, on the national website as well as on our [TCF/USA Facebook Page](#) and elsewhere as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.



## Connect With Us on Facebook

We are on Facebook. It is a closed group where we can continue our discussions in private. Your other Facebook friends will not be able to see what you post there, and you will not be able to share postings by others. You have to join Facebook first before you can become a member. Please go to <https://www.facebook.com/groups/BPUSAAAC/> and ask to join. You will be approved within 24 hours. If you have any questions or problems, please contact June Erickson at [JuneErickson@aol.com](mailto:JuneErickson@aol.com).



## Resources

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

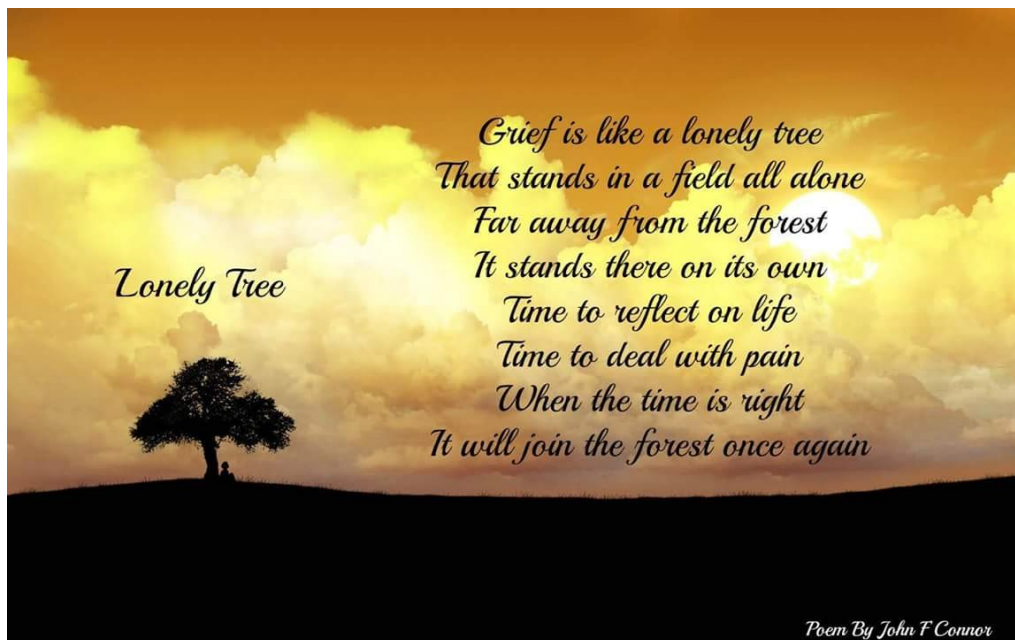
For Grief Resources, please visit our Chapter website at:

<http://www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org/HTML/Resources.htm>

Also try this useful website at <http://grievingparents.net>

*"Dare to reach out your hand  
Into the darkness  
To pull another hand into the light.*

*~ Norman B. Rice ~*



[www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org](http://www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org)



## The Anne Arundel County Chapter of the Bereaved Parents of the USA

### Twelfth Annual Memory Walk Quiet Waters Park, Annapolis, MD

October 3, 2015

8:30 a.m. *Rain or Shine*

### **REGISTRATION & WAIVER FORM**

*A separate Registration & Waiver Form must be completed and signed  
by each person participating in the Memory Walk*

### ***I Am Walking In Memory Of*** \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Pledge Amount\* \_\_\_\_\_ *\*Please make checks payable to: BP/USA – AA County*

*The Anne Arundel County Chapter of The Bereaved Parents of the USA, states that no goods or services were provided in exchange for your contribution. Your contribution is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. The Anne Arundel County Chapter of The Bereaved Parents of the USA, is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt not-for-profit organization. Our employer identification number is 36-4081249.*

A pledge is not required to participate in the Walk. If you cannot participate in the walk, but would like someone to walk in your child's memory, please print out and fill in this form and send it along with your pledge to: BPUSA/AA County, P.O. Box 6280, Annapolis, MD 21401-0280

If you have any questions about this event, please send an email to: [aacountymemorywalk@gmail.com](mailto:aacountymemorywalk@gmail.com)  
or go to our website at **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**

### **LIABILITY WAIVER MUST BE SIGNED BEFORE PARTICIPATING IN MEMORY WALK**

WAIVER AND RELEASE: I recognize that participation in the Anne Arundel County Chapter Memory Walk may involve certain hazards. I understand that I should not participate unless medically able. I assume all risks associated with involvement in this activity, including but not limited to falls, contact with participants, the effects of weather, including high heat and humidity, the conditions of the track and/or road, traffic on the course, and all risks being known and appreciated by me. Having read this waiver or release, knowing these facts and in consideration of my acceptance into this Memory Walk, I, for myself and anyone entitled to act on my behalf, waive and release the Anne Arundel County Chapter of The Bereaved Parents of the USA, and all sponsors and hosts, and their representatives and successors from all claims or liabilities of any kind arising from involvement in this activity.

Signature (Parent or Guardian if under 18): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**The Anne Arundel County Chapter of The Bereaved Parents of the  
USA  
Memory Walk at Quiet Waters Park, Annapolis, Maryland**

***We like to acknowledge all donations, so please print your name and address  
neatly and completely***

Name and Address	In Memory Of	Pledge Amount

For additional information please contact Barbara Bessling  
at [aacountymemorywalk@gmail.com](mailto:aacountymemorywalk@gmail.com) or 410-761-9017 or go to our website at  
<http://www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org>