



# A JOURNEY TOGETHER

## NEWSLETTER OF THE BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

VOLUME IX NO. 4, Fall 2004  
(October, November, December)

### AUTUMN TEARS

Penny Young  
Powell River, British Columbia,  
Canada

We look back on September and we realize that somehow we made it through those dreaded first days of school. Whether it was the anticipation or the actual days that were the worst, we survived. We used our faith, our support system or just plain hard work and made it over yet another hurdle.

We watched small children heading off for their first day of kindergarten, listened to excited teenagers talk of high school and heard stories of children leaving home to attend college. Somehow we rode the waves of grief and found ourselves ashore again.

As these waves subside, new ones will build as we head into the holidays that speak of and to children. Halloween will soon approach and some painful memories. Thanksgiving arrives to exemplify family and togetherness and Christmas looms ahead. These special days are forever reminders of our loss...the costumes we'll never sew, the empty chair at the turkey dinner, and fun and magic we'll never share with someone we love.

To survive when these events and anniversary days come around, find time to think of the good memories...a daughter helping prepare the turkey dinner, the look of excitement on a son's first Halloween Night.

These holidays will always be reminders that our child died.... Let us also make them reminders that our child lived! They left us memories more precious than any others to hold and celebrate.



### HALLOWEEN AND BEYOND

Shirley Corrigan, BP/USA of  
North Texas

I was preparing to go out to purchase candy for the "great pumpkin day," when I thought of other upcoming holidays: Thanksgiving, Christmas, Chanukah, and New Year's Day. These days can threaten us bereaved families so much. This year marks the fifth holiday season since my son Douglas' death and I still have a fleeting desire to run and hide. Although last season was not as terrible as the one before, I know I'll shed tears again this year during some lonely and sad moments. These are very private moments of grief for me now.

For those of you who do not attend support meetings, our group's newsletter may be the only link you have to other bereaved parents. Please take time for yourself during these holidays. Take time to cry and to be alone. Refrain from taking on assignments from others who cannot know your exhaustion. Ask for what you need. I know it is tough to tell

someone else that you hurt and need something from him or her. But you need not pretend to be okay when, in fact, you are not. An honest request will usually be met with at least some sort of understanding and helpfulness.

Healing is a slow process requiring much work. You know those who say that time will heal all wounds have never experienced great loss. What they do not know...and cannot know...is that grief work is not just the passage of time, but the pain, the suffering and the struggle to reclaim a full life which occurs over time. Time is not the healer; it is your own effort, your own strength, and your own determination that makes healing possible. Take all the time you need to heal your spirit and your will to live again; Be good to yourself. Remember the healing is possible through your effort and determination, not simply the passage of time.

Look at yourself  
in the mirror

Say to yourself  
"It is hard to lose a child."

Say to yourself  
"It is reasonable to hurt."

Say to yourself  
"Healing takes time."

Be good to yourself!

Sascha  
THE SORROW AND THE  
LIGHT

**BEREAVED PARENTS OF  
THE USA**

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**2004-2005  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
AND OFFICERS**

The Board of Directors for this coming year are as follows: Pat Moser, President; Kevin Hunsaker, Vice President; Carol Welch, Secretary; Cathy Bender, Gathering Chair, Beverly Hurley and Theresa Valentine, Member at Large Representative. The Board appointed Jack Ewart to serve the year remainder of the term of Mitch Dudnikov.

The Board has appointed David Hurley as Treasurer, and Sarah Ryan as Sibling Representative.



**PAT MOSER**

Pat Moser of the Marion County Chapter of BP/USA received two honors at the 2004 Gathering in Charleston, SC.

Because of all of her endless and compassionate work with the Marion County BP/USA Chapter and because of her work for 4 years with the Board of Directors of BP/USA supporting Chapters and helping new chapters to be founded, Pat was voted the recipient of the Roy and Juanita Peterson Award for 2004. She was nominated by her chapter, and several other persons. She joins the past recipients in being honored for their service to bereaved parents. Past recipients are Roy and Juanita Peterson, John Goodrich, Mary Cleckley, Renee and Mitch Dudnikov, Pat and Paul Kinney and Shirley Ottman.

Her second recognition was at the meeting of the new Board of Directors for 2005 where she was elected as President. We know that all of you who know Pat are pleased for these recognitions. We know even more of you will become aware of her work this coming year.

**FROM THE PRESIDENT**

I am both honored and humbled to become the new President of BP/USA. It is with much excitement and anticipation that I look forward to this job.

It is because I know first hand how much this group can help bereaved families survive the deaths of their children that I want to work to see BP/USA continue to grow and reach out to hurting families across the country.

I want to say a BIG thank you for all of us to our outgoing President, Betty Ewart, for her 6 years of hard work and dedication to BP/USA, three of them as President. Thanks also to our outgoing Board Secretary, Mary Murphy, who also contributed much to the growth of BP/USA during her six years.

Our appreciation is also extended to Dolly Criswell, Chairperson, and her committee from the Lowcountry, Charleston, SC BP/USA Chapter for a wonderful 2004 Gathering. They showed what the determination of a small chapter pulling together can do. We are already looking forward to our next Gathering in Las Vegas, Nevada, July 14-17, 2005.

Please know that I and the BP/USA cares about each of you and are here to help you on your grief journey in anyway we can.

Hugs, Pat Moser



**FROM  
THE  
EDITOR**

The holiday seasons are coming and we hope this Newsletter will supply you with some thoughts and inspiration on facing these days however many years it might have been since your child's death.

You will find information on the web site about groups that the Board voted to add to our Link list. We hope these will be of help to you. As always, the Newsletters will be on the Web site too. Refer friends or other bereaved persons you might know to our web site.

As information is available about the 2005 Gathering, it will be on the web site also.

May your holiday season be filled with happy memories of past holidays and the strength to make new memories.

## A MOTHER'S HOPE

By Betty Lineberger  
BP/USA of Marion County FL

When our son died, I hoped it was a mistake. It was not. I hoped it was a dream. It was not. Before my son died, I hoped for enough time in that day to clean my house, provide my family with clean laundry, taxi service and healthy meals. I loved dinner time with my family. After my son died, I did not know what day it was, cleaning our home or doing laundry were things I no longer thought of. I did not cook, I did not shop for food, I did not eat. I hoped he would come back. He did not. I hoped I would gain understanding. I did not. I could not understand how I could wake up on a perfectly normal morning and my son was gone from his room, gone from our home and gone from our lives. I hoped for acceptance. I found none. I hoped those around me would understand me. They did not. How could my beautiful, vibrant, healthy son be gone?

I hoped for peace. I had none. I hoped for sleep. I had none. I hoped for courage to resume my daily life. My life was out of my control. The only thing I was sure of in the early days of my grief was that I knew our life would never be the same again. I hoped this empty feeling would go away. It did not. I hoped that some day my family would be normal again. We were not. I hoped I could stop looking for our son in every young man I saw that was tall, slim and had sandy colored curly hair. I could not. I hoped I could become the parent to my surviving children that I knew they deserved. I could not. I knew how much they were hurting but I could not help myself and I could not help my children. My younger son needed my comfort. My daughter, expecting her own child needed my comfort. I was their mother but there was no comfort in me to give. I hoped I could be a wife to my husband. I could not.

I never hoped for laughter. How could I laugh when my son was dead. I hoped the feelings that consumed my every waking moment would somehow change so I did not feel as though I could never again be in a public place without crying. At 6 months after my son died, I hoped for a reprieve. I no longer could stand the pain and I saw my doctor. I knew he must have an answer to my question, "How long will I feel like this?" He did not.

I had begun attending Bereaved Parents meetings and hardly spoke a word at the first meeting. I could not stop talking at my second meeting. I had found the glimmer of hope that I had been searching for. I hoped this all consuming grief would never again happen to my family. But it did! When my daughter in law was 6 months pregnant, my son told me their baby had died. How I grieved for my son. I knew what he was feeling. I hoped to be able to help him and his wife. I could not.

I then realized that all of the things I had hoped for had begun to come about but had taken a lot of time. I hoped my son and his wife could hold on long enough for time to help and heal. They have. When my son died, I never hoped for joy. I could not imagine joy as part of our lives ever again. But there is joy. When my son was a baby, a toddler, a young child, a teenager and young man, I watched over him. I thought I would watch over him for my entire life. But I was wrong. I hope with all my heart that he is watching over me.

I now have the understanding I hoped for. I have peace. I finally sleep. I find joy every time I see a tall, slim young man with sandy colored curly hair. I do not cry as often. So there is hope. We all have a future; we have memories. No matter how long our children were part of our lives, we have memories. The first time I realized that joy would one day be part of my life was the day I remembered a trick my son played on his little brother. He gave him a glass of buttermilk instead of regular milk and pretended it was a mistake. We have laughed so many times about this little story. I can still see the twinkle in his eye. I can hear my son and daughter as he made up names for her to tease her. Oh, how he loved to laugh. I remember the look on his face when I discovered the snake he put in my garden terrarium.

I know the joy I feel every time I think of my son, share a memory with someone or look at pictures of him will never change.

My hope as a Mother is that we all will find peace and cherish the joy our children have brought to our lives.





## BOOK REVIEWS

**BUT I DIDN'T SAY GOODBYE** by Barbara Rubel is for parents and professionals helping children who are suicide survivors. She gives good information and suggestions for helping children deal with the suicide of a loved one which would help others deal with other types of death also. The last section of the book has a large collection of web sites, publishers and books that is a very good listing. The book is available from Griefwork Center, Inc., PO Box 5104, Kendall Park, NJ 08824.

**THE LONG NIGHTS OF MOURNING: A Journey with Grief after Sudden Loss** is by Janis Ost Ford. The book is dedicated to those who lost loved ones in the Alaska Airlines crash in January of 2000. She experienced the loss of her mother and her mother's companion, her brother and sister-in-law and 4 month old niece so she truly speaks with authority and feeling. She tells how she comes to realize that she must find acceptance and little joys in her life if she is to survive. There is a beautiful CD of special music on the back of each book also. You may get the book from Janis Ost Ford, PO Box 5332, Santa Cruz, CA 95063-5332. Twenty five percent of the cost of the book goes to the National Air Disaster Alliance/Foundation.

**OH JOE! A Father's Struggle to Survive The Loss Of His Son** is by Joseph E. Leblanc, Jr. It is poetry that he wrote following the death of his older son and deals with the many feelings he had and you will find that you had too. The entries are dated so that you can see the progression through grief. This is an example of the value of keeping a log or diary. The book is available from the publisher iUniverse, Inc., 2921 Pine Lake Rd., Suite 100, Lincoln, ND 68512.

## BOARD ELECTIONS

Nominations for election to the BP/USA National Board of Directors are being received now. Elections will be at the next Gathering. There are two vacancies for representatives of Chapters and one for a representative of the Members At Large. The qualifications include interest in and past activity in the BP/USA on a local or national level. If you have a nomination, please send it by January 2005 to the chairperson, Theresa Valentine at 5197 North 142nd Street, Omaha, NE 68164-6094 or by e-mail at [www.tavlsv@radiks.net](mailto:www.tavlsv@radiks.net).

### SPECIAL OFFERS

**Gathering Videos:** Dave and Bev Hurley video taped many of the speeches and workshops at the Gathering. It is possible to purchase these for \$6 each including postage. For a listing of the tapes available and the order blank, you will find the information on the web or you may call Dave at 813-831-2588 or e-mail him at [David.Hurley@gte.net](mailto:David.Hurley@gte.net).

**Gathering Pictures:** If the picture of your child was in the closing presentation at the Gathering, whether you attended or not, Dave Simone and his wife have offered to make 8 x 10 copies of those pictures with the very special background of the light house. These will cost \$10 for one and \$3 for each additional one. The proceeds, after costs, will go to BP/USA for the support of next years Gathering. You will find an order blank on the web for this too or you may contact Dave Simone at [dcsimone@prodigy.net](mailto:dcsimone@prodigy.net) or call him at 813-653-1717. Get a beautiful memento and support BP/USA too. Our thanks to the Simones for this beautiful program and this generous offer.

**Christmas Cards:** Christmas Cards are again available from the Hinsdale BP/USA Chapter. This year the package of cards will be a selection of past cards. You may find out more about this on our web site also or see the enclosed flyer.

## Kubler-Ross

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross died on August 24, 2004. She gave so many their first insights into death and dying and, in later years, continued to inspire others by her writings and work with Aids victims. Her information on the butterflies scratched on the walls of the concentration camps by the children as they were lined up to be cremated was a source of the use of butterflies as a symbol for support groups. Her son said that many parents whose children had died wrote to tell her that her books give them a sense that they could go on.

## MATTIE STEPANEK

Another person who gave so many hope through his writing was Mattie Stepanek, a child who was had muscular dystrophy but a truly great spirit. He appeared with President Carter, on Oprah and with many other interviewers. His books are available in all book stores and they are inspirational. In **JOURNEY THROUGH HEARTSONGS** he told us "A heartsong is something deep inside each of us. It's our sense of why we are here and how we can keep going. It's like a purpose. It may be to live as a mommy or a daddy, or a firefighter, or a delivery person, or a child with a disability who teaches others about patience." and love and acceptance."

## DEATH'S AFTERMATH (To a Newly Bereaved Parent)

Shirley Ottman  
from **THE SLENDER THREAD**

Just a little while ago I walked where you are walking now. Your child was special, too, I know, and was quite different from mine. Yet love is love and death is death and pain is pain. Your pain is mine, my pain is yours. Come, friend, let us search for hope together.

## ALL THE DREAD AND FEAR WAS FOR NOTHING

Margaret Gerner  
BP/USA St. Louis Chapter

We begin dreading “the holidays” shortly after our child dies. A birthday or anniversary coming up soon scares us, but not like the anticipation of Thanksgiving, Christmas or Chanukah does.

We expend mountains of energy dreading and fearing these special times. We either “awfulize” about how we’re going to feel – painting dreadful mental pictures of searing, unbearable pain, hysterical reactions or just plain fainting away.

Or, we absolutely refuse to allow our minds to even touch on thoughts of the days. Either way, the dread and fear can overwhelm us. Let me make some suggestions.

First, know that it is perfectly normal to be afraid of what we THINK might happen. Our reaction to the death of our child is so unlike anything we ever expected that we are sure that the holidays are going to be even worse. Let me assure you. Just as your grief reactions are normal, so is your fear.

Secondly, remember that by the time “the day” arrives, you have completed most of the hard work of the holidays. It’s in the DOING of holiday tasks that the pain lies, so, by the time the day arrives, the real work is over.

Thirdly, know that the day is only twenty-four hours long. You’ll get through it like you get through any other day – some harder, some easier.

Lastly, take charge of your fear. Tell yourself that it’s okay to have any emotion you want about the holidays. Make concrete plans for your behavior. Give yourself permission to cry or scream or, yes, even faint if you feel like it. Make contingent plans that you can put into practice if you actually become distraught.

But I just bet you won’t. I’ll never forget the first Christmas after my granddaughter, Emily, died. I expected the worst and prepared for it. I was going to lean into the pain. I set out a new box of Kleenex for the crying. I told my son and his family that I didn’t know what time I’d be at their house to open presents, or if I would even show up. I arranged with a bereaved friend that we would call the other if the pain got too great. You know what happened? Nothing.

I didn’t feel the need to cry. I went to my son’s house in the early afternoon. And I didn’t call my bereaved friend. All the dread and fear was for nothing. The work of preparing for the day was already over. “The day” was simply a day like any other in my grief.

And I had taken control of the day by preparing for whatever my behavior turned out to be.

Many holidays have passed since my son and my granddaughter died. Some have been easy to go through and some haven’t. But I’ve found that I got through them a lot easier than I expected.

So will you.

## FROM ONE WHO KNOWS

By Sascha

I promise you, my friend  
I promise you  
that you will feel  
the warmth of spring again  
that you will touch  
the hands of children  
and the lips of lovers  
and the tenderness of Christmas again.  
But here and now, my friend,  
I promise you small consolation.  
Some mornings you will see  
beauty in your sorrow,  
Comfort in the wealth of love remembered,  
courage in the aching tide of days.  
I promise you, my friend,  
I promise you  
that you will understand  
someday  
some day  
this pain which taught you  
what depth and height  
and greatness  
one life can hold.  
YOUR LIFE, my friend.

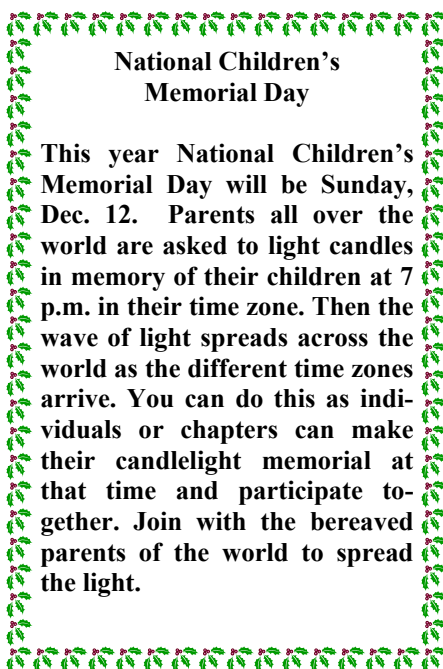


From an article in Bereavement  
Magazine, Nov./Dec. 1988  
[www.bereavementmag.com](http://www.bereavementmag.com)

By Dorothy Hanley

The candles can be reminders that, as time passes, what began as a view of a frighteningly dark future may finally be seen in the light of your own personal growth toward adjustment to the death of your loved one. Just as the rain passes and a single ray of sunlight at first illuminates only a tiny spot in the dark landscape, light will return to your life, bit by bit.

Take heart and try not to be too afraid of the dark. Look for the candles along the way to give you hope for a brighter new year.



### National Children’s Memorial Day

This year National Children’s Memorial Day will be Sunday, Dec. 12. Parents all over the world are asked to light candles in memory of their children at 7 p.m. in their time zone. Then the wave of light spreads across the world as the different time zones arrive. You can do this as individuals or chapters can make their candlelight memorial at that time and participate together. Join with the bereaved parents of the world to spread the light.

## REINVESTING

As time passes after the death of our child, we begin to think about what to do next – how to reinvest the love and energy we are left with after our loss. Many BP/USA members have found helping others to be the best way to begin to heal ourselves. Two BP/USA leaders were recognized this past month for their volunteer work. As all who work to help others will tell you, they do not work for recognition or reward save knowing their child would be proud of them. We do want to mention these though. If you know of others, let us know.

Virginia Gallian, member moderator and secretary of the BP/USA of North Texas, received the prestigious “Friend of Education Award from the Texas State Teachers Association. Virginia has taught in 5 states and in Denton for 25 years. She has also been active in education circles in the state of Texas. Many children have benefited from her work.

Betty Ewart of the Greenbrier Valley WV BP/USA and the newsletter editor and past national president, was honored by her university alumni association, receiving the 2004 Alumni Distinguished Award. This was presented at a special ceremony at the University for her work in her chosen field of church music and her volunteer work with the Red Cross, American Heart and Lung Associations and other groups. Special mention was made of her work with the Bereaved Parents .

Both Betty and Virginia will tell you that there were times they did not think they would want to go on doing things as they had before the death of their children. They will also tell you that these awards are something that they would gladly give back if they could have their beloved children back. But they would also tell you that as you help others, you are helped yourself to face the days and years ahead.

Someone needs you too!

## A DECEMBERED GRIEF: Living with loss while others are celebrating

By Harold Ivan Smith

It may be tempting to do a seasonal hibernation and mutter, “Wake me up when it is over.” Many grievors have remarked at the start of this season, “I wish I could go to bed and wake up and it would be January.” Indeed some will use numbing instruments such as alcohol, food, shopping, being constantly on the go to do just that.

Kris Kristofferson sang, “Help me make it through the night.” Grievors may well sing, “Help me make it through the *holidays*.”

But the holidays have serendipity moments – those wonderful emotional and spiritual ambushes, moments when joy sneaks up on you. In the midst of great grief, there are small moments that break through to our hearts. We need those to buffer our souls and spirits for the tough times. It may begin with a simple prayer. *Lord, help me make it through this day.* It may end with a simple offering of gratitude: *Lord, thank You for helping me make it through this day.*

Millie, a widow, had it right. When people asked how she was making it without Herb, who had been called “Mr. Christmas,” she answered, “One day at a time.” Sometimes that translates “one *hour* at a time.”

(Editor’s Note: This book is available from Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, Missouri and it contains many good ideas for help during the holiday season. )



## SIBLING COLUMN

Sarah Ryan, BP/USA  
Board Sibling Representative

I am on my way home from Charleston, SC, where the National Gathering has just ended. (It was wonderful!. Thank you, Lowcountry Chapter.) I have been sitting for the last three hours. Irony: My flight home only takes two hours and thirty minutes. Anyway I sit here surrounded by inane comments. While my fellow fliers are rightfully frustrated, they are complaining about not being offered a second cup of coffee. I want to stand up in the middle of the plane and say, “Are you safe? Then be thankful.” “Is your brother or sister still alive? Then stop your whining.” My fellow fliers have no idea who truly blessed they are. Most have not been visited by death, their families are still intact and their world hasn’t been shattered. But you know how blessed they are. You know the value of life. I do too. My name is Sarah and my sibling was killed five years ago in a vehicle accident. This column space has been given to the siblings to talk with each other. You can send comments to [sibling-group@bpusastl.org](mailto:sibling-group@bpusastl.org).

### A BROTHER SPEAKS

Marc A Johnson North Texas BP/  
USA  
“Where Are All the Butterflies?”

It has been three years since I received the news and was so amazingly stunned that my sister had been killed. I still relive that moment from time to time, although much less frequently now. Every now and then I think *I’ve got to tell Teri that...* and then I’ll catch myself and relive the anxiety that accompanies her loss. My loss, actually. I was counting on Teri’s good memory and fun loving spirit to keep my spirits up in old age.

Now I’ll have to do it myself-or maybe my brother will help. I cannot look death in the eye and call it by its name. I choose to believe in the continuation of the spirit and believe that in love and in family, we will be together again.

## BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

BP/USA Coeur d'Alene Chapter  
BP/USA Lowcountry Chapter  
Mary Lou Clarkson  
Mary Murphy  
Renee Dudnikov  
Chapters, Businesses & Individuals

In loving memory of the children of the chapter members  
In loving memory of Mitch Dudnikov  
Donation for the work of BP/USA  
In loving memory of her son, Dylan  
Donation to 2005 Gathering  
Donations to the 2004 Gathering

If we missed listing a donation, we apologize. If you will notify the Treasurer of your gift and the memorial, we will be sure it is acknowledged in the next Newsletter. Thank you. Our Treasurer is Dave Hurley and he may be reached at 3805 West San Juan Street, Tampa, Florida 33629-7819, by phone at 813-831-2588 or by e-mail at david.hurley@gte.net.

Since BP/USA is a qualified charitable 501(c) (3) organization, your donation may be tax deductible. The work of BP/USA is financed entirely by contributions. All the leaders, national and local, are volunteers. Donations go directly to help chapters, to help in the sending of the Newsletter and to keep costs of the Gathering as low as possible. You may designate your donation to any of these areas or to the general work of the BP/USA. If there is no designation, the money will be used for general operating funds. Please always designate carefully how you wish a memorial or gift listed. We thank our chapters, individual members and other friends for their generous support of BP/USA and its work.

### PICTURES FROM THE 2004 GATHERING



Display of Memorial Candles



Tampa & Ocala Florida Chapter Members



Betty Ewart (second from left) with Peterson Awardees  
John Goodrich, Mary Cleckley, Pat Kinney, Renee  
Dudnikov. Shirley Ottman is hidden!



Jack Ewart passes First Man Cap to Pete Moser