

A Journey Together

National Newsletter of the *Bereaved Parents* of the USA

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WHAT I DID ON MY SUMMER VACATION!

Submitted by Donna Corrigan
Hinsdale BP/USA Chapter
BP/USA Board Member

As I see summer coming to an end and the children preparing for a new school year, I remember that dreaded first assignment in grade school: "What I did on my summer vacation!" I knew my boring trips to visit the extended family didn't compare to the exotic trips that included hotels and campgrounds and national parks like so many others.

Fast forward 40 some years; it's still not the "summer vacation" that most would dream of, but it's mine.

Two events stand out: a four-day seminar at the National Academy of Bereavement where I learned the anachronism S.T.U.G. For many years, bereavement counselors believed that it was abnormal for the healing path of the bereaved to have huge, overwhelming valleys of pain interrupt their "normal journey". Dr. Christine Rando recognized these as being very normal responses to a sensory experience. In other words, a sound, a smell, a picture, etc. would trigger a S.T.U.G. (Sudden Temporary Upsurge of Grief). How well we know that these are normal, very common events in our new abnormal lives.

At the Bereaved Parents National Gathering, I learned another new term: "Civilians". It describes those fortunate people who are not bereaved.

Such a simple term, but it says so much! We have been drafted into a whole new society; we are, and always will be bereaved parents.

So, what did I bring away from my summer vacation trips? Some new knowledge and understanding to carry on my grief journey and a renewed appreciation for those who choose to take the pain of their loss to help people just like me.

Were either of these trips the summer vacation I always dreamed of? Of course not! But it's mine.



HALLOWEEN AND BEYOND

By Shirley Carrigan
BP/USA of North Texas

I was getting ready to go to the store to purchase candy for the "great Pumpkin day," which brought my attention to the holidays of preceding years: Thanksgiving, Christmas, Chanukah and New Year's—those days that threaten bereaved parents so much. This is the fifth holiday season since my Douglas's death, yet 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 times. These are very private moments of grief for me now.

For those of you who do not attend support meetings, our newsletters may be the only link you have to other bereaved parents. Please take time for yourself during the holidays. Take time to cry and to be alone. Try not to take on assignments from other family members who cannot know the exhaustion you experience. Ask for the things you think you need. Others cannot read your mind, yet it is so difficult to tell someone that you are hurting and need something from him or her. There is no requirement to pretend you are okay, when in fact, you are not.

Healing is a slow process requiring a lot of work. I always know when others have never experienced a great loss for they will say, "Time will heal all wounds." What they do not know and cannot know is that healing a great grief requires hard work and lots of time. Time itself cannot heal anything. It is not the passage of time in itself, but the pain and suffering endured and the struggle to reclaim one's life which will make healing possible. Others see only the end result without realizing the work that went into the healing process.

Take the time you need to complete your work; to heal your spirit, mind and body; to regain your will to live. Be good to yourself. Remember that healing is possible through your own effort and determination and not simply by the passage of time.



**BEREAVED PARENTS OF
THE USA**

A Journey Together is a national newsletter published quarterly by Bereaved Parents of the USA.

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You will find articles, location of Chapters, links to other organizations and other information on that web site also.

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**FROM THE
DESK OF
THE
EDITOR**

Another Gathering is history and it was a very good combination of speakers and workshops. You may know that Martha Honn—Jack and I were co-chairs with her and her husband, Gene - found that she had been given a diagnosis of cancer and needed to start treatment right away. Jack and I completed the Gathering arrangements. We could not have done it without the help of the Board of Directors, many of the BP/USA Chapters and others. I have attempted to thank everyone and list them on page 7, but if I have overlooked anyone, I apologize. Just know that Jack and I thank all of you who helped. Although attendance was down, probably because of the economic conditions, we had a good attendance and the evaluations were very positive.

I would like to highly recommend the DVD's of the speakers that Reg Hamman made for us. Those DVD's would be excellent for both personal use and to use as a program for a chapter meeting. Especially the one of the keynoter, Ron Greer would give many areas for discussion. To purchase copies of these DVD's, you may download an order blank on our web, under the heading "Store". You may also contact Reg about an order at regandglenda@sbcglobal.net.

The order blank for the annual Christmas Card that the Hinsdale Chapter provides is included in this newsletter as an insert.

I would also recommend the brochures and other items that the National BP provides. Order blanks for those are also on the website under "Store".

The 2009 Gathering will be at the LaGuardia Airport Crowne Plaza Hotel on July 10 to 12, 2009. For information contact 2009Gathering@bereavedparentsusa.org.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Shirley Ottman

As the new president of the BP/USA Board of Directors, I certainly look forward to the coming year. The BP/USA Board is very much a working board. The board's work is divided among all the board members so that each one has assigned tasks and duties, and each task is important to the entirety of the board's work. These duties include assisting new chapters to be chartered, recommending appropriate links for our website, processing orders for supplies and brochures, nominating new candidates for election to the board each year, maintaining a liaison with our national webmaster, encouraging prospective gathering hosts, designing chapter website guidelines, planning leadership training sessions, envisioning future needs and responsibilities, implementing new programs, publishing the Chapter Chat and *A Journey Together*, maintaining BP/USA's historical record, securing writers for new brochures and grant proposals, educating the public about parental and sibling grief—and more. And, of course, your board must accomplish all its work within its limited finances. So you see what a busy Board we have!

As President, my goals this year are to ascertain our chapters' additional needs and then to find ways to meet those needs while continuing the work we have been doing. Your board produces the materials needed to assist new chapter formation and continuing chapter involvement.

No one knows better than I that BP/USA's most important work lies within our chapters. None of us would be a part of our chapters or our national organization if we were not deeply concerned about shepherding the newly bereaved families who, unfortunately join our ranks every day. I urge all chapter members and individual members vigorously to embrace the work of BP/USA at all levels. Working together, we can accomplish much for the benefit of all bereaved families wherever they live.

HALLOWEEN

It is here, this day of merriment
and children's pleasure.
Gremlins and goblins
and ghosties at the door
of your house.

And the other children
come to the door of your mind.
Faces out of the past,
small ghosts with sweet, painted
faces.
They do not shout.

Those children who no longer
march laughing
on cold Halloween night,
they stand at the door of your mind
and you will let them in,
so that you can give them
the small gifts of your Halloween —
a smile and a tear.

By Sasha
From WINTERSUN

THAT TIME OF YEAR

By Mary Cleckley
BP/USA Member

It's Halloween time again. Is that
thought bothering you? It proba-
bly is, particularly if you had a
little one who would have been out
doing a little tricking and getting a
lot of treating that night!

Or, maybe your child was too
small or didn't live to see even one
Halloween. That hurts too, doesn't
it? Sometimes we grieve for what
was and sometimes we grieve for
what could have been.

Maybe, like me, your child was too
old for conning neighbors into
treats, but it still is a hard night in
the beginning. All special days and
nights are.

If you have small children who
need to be a part of this special
night, maybe a family member or a

good friend will accompany them on
their appointed rounds. They'll enjoy
the evening just as much and you can
"treat" yourself by choosing to stop
the world and get off for a little
while.

If you have no children at home, this
may be a good time to close up shop
for that one night. Take in a movie—
or stay at home and give no inviting
signs that say you want to participate
in the festivities of the evening. Do
what is comfortable for you.

One day you will be able to enjoy
treating the little ones again. This
just may not be the year. Isn't it good
to know our needs and abilities
change as time goes by?



THANKSGIVING MY CHILD HAS DIED DON'T EXPECT ME TO BE THANKFUL

Linda Moore,
Orange County BP/USA

Friends ... if this is your first
Thanksgiving since the death of your
child, I am very sorry. There is nothing
I can say here to make it any better;
wish I could. Everyone has to do
the holiday thing in their own
way....whatever might make you the
most comfortable. I will share with
you part of my Thanksgiving tradi-
tions.

For years our family had gone away
for Thanksgiving. We were joined by
extended family and it was always a
good time. When our kids were little,
we went camping and cooked the
turkey outside in a smoker. Some
great memories were created.

The kids got older and I figured out
that fixing a big meal outdoors was
only for everyone else, not the ones
bringing everything for it and fixing
it! Our plan then changed and we
began going to a hotel on the beach.

Now that was the way to go! We had
a big suite, nice heated pool at
ocean's edge and maid service!

Then, one year, Brad died two
months before Thanksgiving. I could
not fathom being thankful. My child
had died!! All the hotel arrange-
ments had been made the year be-
fore. We were on automatic pilot
and just went with the flow. We did
insist on everyone sharing a memory
with Brad and lighting a candle in
his memory. When I made this re-
quest there were probably some anx-
ious moments... I don't remember,
nor did I care. In some ways, I think
it was good for us, sticking with
some of the traditions that Brad
loved and adding new ones to honor
him. Was it hard? No doubt. Should
we have stayed home... gone some-
where else? No matter where we
would have gone, he still would not
have been there... there is no getting
around that. The pain would have
been with us no matter where we
were.

We told Brad we loved him, writing
it in huge letters in the sand. I spent
quiet moments by myself, walking
on the beach. I cried by myself and
with others. I even laughed a couple
of times as we shared silly moments
of other Thanksgiving days with
Brad. Most of the day, I felt I was in
the "twilight zone"... participating
but removed.

That night, when I was by myself, I
sat and wrote a letter to Brad... a
letter telling him how thankful I was
that he was my son, that I had him
for those 17 years, 364 days...that I
was thankful for every moment,
great, good and not so good. I was
thankful for the love we still had.
Have I ever had a "normal" Thanks-
giving again? NO...no. I have rear-
ranged things in my mind... some
things I keep to myself so others can
fully enjoy the day. But I always in-
clude Brad in some way. I cannot
change that he is no long physically
here... so I have to change my world
to make way for this new life of mine
and make the best of it.



BOOK REVIEWS

OUR CHILDREN, OUR HEARTS : Journeys of Child Loss and Remembrance is a helpful book edited by Emily Laitmon and Terry Toll. It is a collection of stories by parents from the Bereavement Center in Tuckahoe, NY. They share experiences dealing with many causes of death and from varying years of experience since the death. The final part of the book is a series of articles about certain parts of the grief journey, dealing with holidays, sibling involvement, the grief of a bereaved mother who is also a grandmother to that child's children and how she helps them with their grief. The publisher is The Bereavement Center of Westchester, 69 Main St., Tuckahoe, NY 10707, telephone: 914-961-2818 X317.

FROM MY SON'S GARDEN by Brenda Hahn Green is "A Personal Story of Growth and Healing After the Loss of a Child." This book was in our bookstore at the Gathering and it fit so well with our theme and logo that I bought it to read. Brenda takes us through the devastation of the loss of her son and the ways in which her family pulled their lives together again. She divides the book into sections dealing with the immediate loss and the first, second and third years and her explanation of the changes as time goes on is very good. Each section is divided into 3 areas: "Taking Care of You and Yours", "Relating to Others" and "Taking Action". The Greens started a garden at their home, and after cremating their son, buried his ashes there. Over the years, the garden has grown and is a lasting memorial to their son, Joby, The publisher is American House Book Publishers in Baltimore, MD and they can be reached at www.publishamerica.com.

ETERNAL BONDS OF LOVE by Claudio Petrillo and Silvia Knoploch is a book about their experiences after the death of their son, Ricardo.

They report that the book was communicated to them by their son in after death experiences. It can be ordered by visiting www.booksurge.com.

THE ART OF SAYING GOODBYE is a book by Arthur Samuels who is an MD psychiatrist and Professor of psychiatry at Tulane. His is a book with ideas about how to handle grief after a death and after other losses. Rabbi Grollman found this, "A compelling, readable book of wisdom and practical insights for anyone who will ever have to deal with grief — in other words, every one of us." The book is published by Element, a trademark of HarperCollins Publishers Ltd. in London. Dr. Samuels can be reached at stresstc40@yahoo.com regarding the purchase of the book.

MOURNING SARAH - A CASE FOR TESTING GROUP B STREP by Theresa Huttlinger Vigour. The book deals with the death of her child and how she handled it but especially with the disease of group B strep. She does much to further the understanding of this disease and help to educate the public and expectant parents about the signs and symptoms and how to deal with it. The book is published by Radcliff Publishing Ltd. in the United Kingdom and in NY. You may obtain the book in a bookstore or from Radcliff Publishing, Ashland, Ohio at 1-800-247-6553.

MELINA OUR PRINCESS FOREVER is a beautiful small book about a personal journey of grieving by Mirjam Martinez. Her message is also about her journey through her feelings about God as it relates to the loss of her child. Melina died of cancer at nine months of age and the book is truly written from the heart. Mirjam heard of BP/USA and sent us this book to read and tell our members about. It was published in Switzerland but you may find out about it and how to obtain a copy by writing an e-mail to martinezmg@hotmail.com.

FROM A FATHER'S HEART by Joyce Beaulieu is a collection of articles and poems written by bereaved fathers. Her book, **FROM A MOTH-**

ERS HEART was reviewed in an earlier newsletter. Fathers so often are overlooked and the concern is "How is your wife doing?" This book shows some of the ways in which men grieve, how this differs from the way in which women grieve and the need of fathers to be helped through their grieving process. The book is published by PublishAmerica, LLLP in Baltimore. You may obtain this book from Centering Corp. You may also contact www.publishamerica.com or Joyce at missucassie@cs.com.

(The following review was written by David Hurley.)

PINKY-SWEAR by Persis Oberreither bares the pain the parents of Amy faced in reaching the decision to disconnect the machines that were substituting for life in their only child. Even at the tender age of 18, Amy and her mother had already had conversations regarding end of life issues. Amy witnessed the helplessness of others and not only had a living will but had entered into an agreement with her mother through the custom of locking pinkies and swearing to each other that they would do their best to fulfill each other's wishes. I first met Persis in 2003 in St. Louis. When she was relating her story, I was overwhelmed by the intensity of her gaze. I sensed that the pain coming through her eyes came straight from her heart. This book shares that pain in a way that it can be understood by all who read it. It will be particularly comforting to others that have shared this experience and help others who may be facing such a decision to understand that they are really not crazy. Persis and Jeff are heroes to me and I am certain that, if Amy were here, she would echo that sentiment. The book is available through Happy Camper Publishing, 10 Spring Drive, Florissant, MO, 63031 or you may reach Persis by e-mail to PersisOberreither@att.net.

NOTE: These are book reviews and not necessarily an endorsement of the book by BP/USA.

CHRISTMAS REFLECTIONS

Dennis Klass
Former advisor to BP/USA

“What child is this who laid to rest, by Mary’s lap is sleeping? Whom angels greet with anthems sweet while shepherds guard are keeping?”

So it’s about a baby—born, celebrated. About the wonder that gathers around a birth. It’s about new life and hope—a rose blooming in the middle of a winter’s snow. Gifts from afar and promise of peace.

Everybody’s baby feels like the Christ Child. The mystery of that birth is repeated for each of us in the birth of our own children. The mystery of something new that never was before, that has nothing but possibilities—those mysteries are all part of every birth. For most people, the hope is for that emerging newness. The birth of the child represents a continual renewal—the opening up of the future as one generation succeeds another.

But it was not a long and happy life. He couldn’t seem to settle down to the carpenter business. When He came home once, He got people so upset that they ran Him out of town.

And He died.

For bereaved parents, some of the message of Christmas is in the irony that this child was born to die. So Christmas has a bittersweet taste for BP members. A baby born and now a child dead. Our love is still going out but there is not a receiver on the other end.

There is another way of looking at it though. “O come to us, abide with us, be born in us this day,” The child lives because he lives in us. Our life was changed by his visit to earth. We have been touched by that specialness that was that child’s alone. Our child did not die so that we would shrivel up. Our child’s birth and death means we must live. The love we had for that child is now ours to give to ourselves

and to others.

We know the meaning of Christmas in a way others can only guess. We thought we would leave our children behind us: now we know that our children have left us behind. We live in their place.

“O come to us, abide with us, be born in us this day.”



The song of yuletide rings
with tears and laughter.
And if you listen deeply,
you will find
the sound of every voice
you ever knew.

Sascha
“The Sorrow and the Light”

WORLD WIDE CANDLE LIGHTING

The second Sunday in December each year is World Wide Candle Lighting day. Starting in New Zealand, families and friends light candles at 7 p.m., local time, for one hour to honor and remember the children who have died of any cause and at any age. Thus the light spreads across the world as 7 p.m. arrives in each area or country.

In 2007 candles were lit in 24 countries and all 50 of our states. Maybe you would like to become a part of this and light a candle at 7 p.m. on December 14.



ANOTHER CHRISTMAS WITHOUT YOU

Written by Alan Pedersen and left at Ashley’s grave on December 25, 2007

The snow is falling gently on this December morn.
I seek the warmth of times before when memories weren’t so worn.
Remembering in Christmas past how festive all would be.
But celebrating still does not come easily for me.

Sweet child of mine I know that you would want me to partake
In all the season offers and give thanks for heaven’s sake.
I’m getting there but thanks is something hard for me to do
When all I see is spending another Christmas without you.

I’ll do better next year; I know you’ve heard that before
But it seems each year I do take part in Christmas a little more.
There was a time when you first left I simply hid away
Now look at me out shopping and it’s almost Christmas Day.

Sweet child of mine I do the best I can to carry on
But Christmas just isn’t Christmas since you’ve been gone.
It has lost the magic and there’s nothing I can do
But do my best spending another Christmas without you.

Merry Christmas Sweetheart,

Love, Dad

2008 GATHERING



Ron Greer Keynote Speaker



Signers Done by Siblings



Decorations and Joy Johnson, Speaker



Alan Pederson And Mitch Carmody



Arch and Butterflies



2008 Peterson Award – Jim and Linda Dixon

BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Shirley Ottman
BP/USA Orange County CA Chapter
Loyola Garcia
Mary Murphy

In loving memory of her daughter, Teri and her husband, Bob
In loving memory of their children
In loving memory of her son, Daniel Gerald Garcia, Jr.
In loving memory of her son Dylan Thornton

If we missed listing a donation, we apologize. If you will notify the Treasurer, David Hurley, at 3805 West San Juan Street, Tampa, Florida 33629-7819, by phone at 813-831-2588 or by email at david.hurley@gte.net of your gift and the memorial, we will be sure it is acknowledged in the next Newsletter. 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 found chapters. There is no charge to found a chapter and each new chapter is given a group of books to help them start a library.

The money is also used to print and send copies of our brochures This quarterly newsletter costs about \$5.25 per year for each one mailed. Donations are always welcome towards that cost. We also welcome donations to help keep the costs of funding our Annual National Gathering as reasonable as possible for the attendees. We also maintain a web site (www.bereavedparentsusa.org).

You may designate a donation to any of these areas by naming it on your donation or to the general work of the BP/USA by giving an undesignated gift. 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.

SPECIAL THANKS FOR DONATIONS TO THE 2008 GATHERING

We wish to thank all of the companies, persons and chapters who made contributions toward parts of the 2008 Gathering. The companies who gave donations to us included St. Mary's Good Samaritan Hospital in Mt. Vernon, IL, The Funeral Service Foundation, Southern Illinois Healthcare, Hughey Funeral Home in Mt. Vernon, IL, Greenbrier Valley Medical Center and Valley Independent Pharmacies both in Lewisburg, WV. Sigma-Aldridge in St. Louis, MO provided ceramic coffee mugs for all the attendees. We also thank Dan Jackson for playing the bag pipes, Reg Hamman for taping the speakers, and Sarah Lee for designing and donating our 2008 Gathering Logo.

Many persons and chapters contributed by placing ads in our program in loving memory of their children and we thank them. The Hinsdale BP/USA Chapter made a donation in loving memory of their children. The Greenbrier Valley BP/USA Chapter underwrote some of the expenses of the Gathering. The St. Louis BP/USA Chapter provided the food for the Hospitality Room and the candles for the Candlelight Memorial. Southern IL BP/USA contributed items for the meal tables in memory of all the children. The Long Island NY BP/USA Chapter contributed 300 Guardian Angel Feather Ornaments for favors in loving memory of their children. Macaroni Angels for the tables were contributed for favors by Corey & James Robinson of the South Central Arkansas BP/USA Chapter. Table favors were also contributed by Barb and Ron Blanton in loving memory of their son, Brett Alan Blanton. Gene and Martha Honn contributed favors in loving memory of their son, Cameron Troy Smith. A poem on a tag on the mugs was provided in memory of Stacie Kitchens and Stacey Rima by their parents. Ronda Gillespie and Glenda Phillips arranged for the decorations of the stage and the butterfly arch. We also thank all the persons and chapters who made items for the Boutique. Things came in so fast that we didn't get all the names but we want you to know that we appreciated those items too. If we missed listing any chapter or person contributing to the Gathering, we apologize. We thank everyone who contributed in any way.

VALUABLE QUOTATIONS FROM RON GREER DURING THE 2008 GATHERING

When you reach the top of the elevator in your grief, remember to go back down to help others .

When a bereaved parent was asked how she was doing, she replied, "I've still got my baggage, but I am down to a carry-on."

Regarding handling your grief, "Suppression brings depression. Expression brings resurrection."

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, strength-ened 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.

**BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA
CREDO**

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