



A JOURNEY TOGETHER

NEWSLETTER OF THE BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

VOLUME VIII NO. 3, Summer 2003
(July, August & September)

ANNIVERSARY

Kathy Corrigan
BP/USA Mid Hudson Chapter
Poughkeepsie, NY

In loving memory of Michael Patrick
Corrigan

We recently marked the 8th anniversary of our son Michael's death on June 26th, 1995. I'm always caught off guard by how easily I am thrown back into the memory of those horrific days when time stood still and the idea of surviving the death of my child seemed inconceivable. During this still difficult time each year, I am reminded of a passage written by Dean Koontz in his book *SOLE SURVIVOR*. He writes, "...he had heard other grieving parents speak of the Zero Point. The Zero Point was the instant of the child's death, from which every future event would be dated, the eye blink during which crushing loss reset your internal gauges to zero. It was the moment at which your shabby box of hopes and wants — which had once seemed to be such a fabulous chest of bright dreams — was turned on and emptied into an abyss, leaving you with zero expectations. In a clock tick, the future was no longer a kingdom of possibility and wonder, but a yoke of obligation — and only the unattainable past offered a hospitable place to live."

I'm not sure if Dean Koontz actually came up with the term Zero Point but the concept is certainly one that I could relate to. The Zero Point has simply become a fact of life for me. I used to speak of things that happened "before I was married..." or "after

the kids were born..." but since June 26th, my reality is measured solely by the time "before Michael died." There is no other calendar for me. The life I lived before Michael died has been blurred by grief and the person I was before Michael died has ceased to exist. And in the days immediately after his death, I was unable to recognize the stranger who had rushed in to inhabit my heart and my mind; worse yet, I really didn't like the person I was becoming. I was exhausted and angry and terrified of what might happen next. I became two-faced, smiling while going through the motions at work and cold and withdrawn from my family when I got home. All that had mattered in my life, all that I had struggled to accomplish seemed worthless and tawdry and insignificant in comparison to what I had lost. Life seemed pointless and senseless. I remember writing in my

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because I am a very different
person now...

journal, "I feel set adrift with no hope of reaching the shoreline." With the writing of those desperate words, came the realization that I had been free falling into a deep, dark hole yet also, in that rare, lucid moment, I caught a tiny glimpse of the "me" I used to be and I recognized the familiar "survivor instinct" that had carried me through other losses in my life. I began to understand that while I could not change the heart-wrenching, life-altering fact that my son had died, I did have a choice about how I would live my life from that day forward. Would I choose bitterness and desolation or would I try to make some sense

out of this tragedy? Would I forever yearn for a future with Michael in it - an impossible dream - or could I learn to celebrate Michael's 21 years with us, as short-lived as that time had been?

Please understand that this awakening did not happen overnight. The climb out of that deep, dark hole took years; I lost my footing and slipped back often. There were times when I barely held on by my fingertips and made no progress at all. There were times when friends carried me and there were even times when I thought that lying at the bottom of that pit was a better option. I used to think that grief was a passive process - that, as time passed, the pain would simply recede. Of course, now, I have eight years of hindsight to clarify my understanding of mourning the death of a child. It is the hardest work I have ever done; it is the most worthwhile endeavor I have ever been a part of. It has given meaning to the most senseless of tragedies, the death of my precious middle son, Michael.

During this anniversary week, I have revisited those days. They are familiar and strangely comforting. The depth of my anguish is a testament to the depth of my love for Michael. But I choose not to remain there, in part because I'm a very different person now, but mostly because my survival, even more than that — my thriving — validates the significance of Michael's all too brief lifetime.

We cherish the time we had with you, Michael, We take comfort in the memory of your warm and loving spirit, your charming humor and your beautiful smile. You are with us always.

**BEREAVED PARENTS OF
THE USA**

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**FROM THE
EDITOR**

The 2003 Gathering is over and it was truly great. See our short report in the column to the left. The Computer Workshop sent many of us home with wonderful address labels, pictures, buttons, personalized cookbooks and other great things that were memorialized for our child. We also received information on how to do this on our own computers. We will post those instructions on the web site as soon as we can and you may receive a copy by contacting me or Pat Moser.

We also had our Annual Meeting and election of Board Members. Theresa Valentine was re-elected representative for the Members At Large. Pat Moser was re-elected to another term and Kevin Hunsaker of the Arkansas Chapter was elected also. We thank Mitch Dudnikov for all his fine work chairing this committee. Information on the 2004 elections are on page 4. The Board elected Dave Hurley as our National Treasurer. How to reach him is on page 7. We thank John Goodrich for serving as interim treasurer after the death of Paul Kinney. The Board voted to take the money donated in memory of Paul and add to it to purchase a bench in memory of Paul for the Memorial Garden in Louisville that Paul and Pat helped to get established.

You will see our brochures, including the Spanish translations, on the web in the very near future. We hope that this will be of help to the many who go into our web site each week seeking help. The Board also announced that a set of brochures and a set of starter books for a library is now given to each new chapter to help them get started. We have 37 chapters and 23 satellite chapters now (60 units) and 128 individuals who are Members At Large. There are almost 800 on the mailing list for this newsletter plus over 50 receiving it by e-mail. Pat Moser and Theresa Valentine are the ones who keep this all going.

Board Member Cathy Bender is now in charge of Chapter Chat and assisting Pat with Chapter development. Mary Murphy continues her good work as Secretary of the Board and Web contact. I agreed to accept one more year as Board President. With such a good and active board, leading the Board is a pleasure.

Please feel free to contact any of us Board members at any time with questions or concerns. Addresses and e-mail addresses are on the web site and throughout the newsletter. If you need any more information or do not have a computer, contact either John Goodrich, who is still our National Representative, or me at the addresses, phones or e-mail in the left column. We are your Board!



**ROY AND JUANITA
PETERSON AWARD**

At the 2003 Gathering, the Roy and Juanita Peterson Award was presented by Juanita Peterson to Shirley Ottman. Shirley has been active in her chapter in Texas and on the national Board of Directors, serving as President also. She and her husband Bob were also chair for the 2001 Gathering in Texas. She has put together a book of her writings about the death of her Teri and her journey through grief. She also helped her chapter put together a book of their writings and both books serve as a source of help and of articles for newsletter editors.

Shirley joins a group of our founders who have received the award: Roy and Juanita, John Goodrich, Mary Cleckley, Mitch and Renee Dudnikov, and Paul and Pat Kinney. We honor all of them and appreciate all that they have done for us.



**Steve & Carol Welch &
Wayne & Sharon Krejci**

A special thanks to the entire St. Louis Chapter for a wonderful Gathering. Over 400 attended – our largest ever – and speakers, workshops, sharing sessions, food, hotel – all were appreciated. Many were heard to say how much help they had received and how they hated to go home because it was such loving and caring time. Thanks everyone who helped.

THE MYTH OF CLOSURE

Ashley Davis Prend
Hospice of North Idaho

“When will I begin to feel better? When will I return to normal? When will I achieve some closure?” griev-ers often ask. Closure, our culture tells us, will bring about a tidy ending, a sense of completion. Some griev-ers hope that the desired magi-cal closure will occur after the fu-neral or memorial service. Others are confident it will come once they have cleared out their loved one’s room. Or maybe after a special per-sonal ritual. Or perhaps after the first anniversary comes and goes – “surely then, we will have closure,” we think. We pray.

The reason we long for closure, of course, is because we would like to neatly seal away all of this pain. We would like to close all the sad, con-fused, desperate angry feelings out of our life. We would like to put all of this behind us.

Closure. What an odd concept really, as if we could truly close the door on pain – turn the lock and throw away the key. The truth is far more com-plex, of course.

Closure is for business deals. Closure is for real estate transactions. Clo-sure is not for feelings or for people we love.

Closure simply does not exist emo-tionally, not in a pure sense. We can-not close the door on the past as if it didn’t exist because, after losing someone dear to us, we never forget that person or the love we shared. And in some ways, we never entirely get over the loss. We learn to live with the loss, to integrate it into our new identity.

Imagine if we really could end this chapter in our life, completely. It would mean losing our memories,

our connections to those we love. If we really found closure, it would ironically hurt even more because the attachment would be severed. And this attachment is vital to us – the memories are treasures to be held close, not closed out.

Perhaps it is better to think in terms of healing. Yes, we can find ways to move on and channel our pain into productive activities. Yes, we can even learn to smile again and laugh again and love again.

But let’s not ever think that we’ll close the door completely on what this loss means for, if we did that, we would unwittingly close the door on all the love that we shared. And that would truly be a loss too terrible to bear.

SOMEDAY

Steven L Channing
TCF Winnipeg, Canada

Someday, it won’t hurt so bad and
I’ll be able to smile again

Someday, the tears won’t flow quite
as freely whenever I think of what
might have been,

Someday, the answers to :why” and
“what if” won’t be quite as
Important,

Someday, I’ll be able to use what
your death has taught me to help
others with their grief,

Someday, I’ll be healed enough to
celebrate your life as much as I now
dwell on your death,

And someday, maybe tomorrow,
I’ll learn to accept the things I
cannot change ...

But, for today ...
I think I’ll just be sad.

SHARING THE LOSS

By Jeanette Dawson
BP/USA Marion County, FL
In memory of her son,
David Lupinaucci

I shared my loss with someone today.
It was heavy on my heart.
It did not take the pain away.
But, at least, it was a start.

I found I wasn’t the only one who
had lost a child so dear.
There were others who understood.
there were others who would hear.

They said that time was the only
thing
that would take the pain away.
And so I sat and listened, to all they
had to say.

They made it a little easier for the
grief I could not hide,
I shared it with them freely, no
longer keeping it inside.

No, it did not take the pain away,
but it was easier to bear.
Just knowing they were listening,
just knowing I could share.

This poem is on a kneeling pew
at the Hartland Chapel across
the street from the Oklahoma
City Memorial.

*In the memory of the
angels from earth
who are now angels
in Heaven*

*In my child’s eyes
I have seen your child’s eyes
in my child’s laughter
I have heard your
child’s laughter
In my child’s embrace,
I have felt your child’s embrace.
And I cried.*

*Love,
A mother*

UPCOMING EVENTS

We are pleased to announce that the planning for the Gathering for 2004 is already well underway. The Gathering will be held on July 9-11, 2004, at the Clarion Hotel-Charleston Airport, Charleston, SC. The theme is LET THEIR LIGHT SHINE and the famous light house there will be the logo.

Registration will be \$15 per person, with a family maximum of \$45. The Hotel cost will be \$82.88 which includes a full breakfast Fri, Sat., and Sun. Up to 4 persons may be in the room for that price and the same price will be available 3 days before and 3 days after the Gathering if you wish to stay for sight seeing. Lunches and Dinners on Fri. and Sat. will be available at a total cost of \$69.83. There is so much to see in Charleston and the Gathering will offer the same great speakers, workshops and sharing sessions we have always had. Materials will be available soon by mail and on the web site. The chair for the Gathering is Dolly Criswell, 1717 Oak Point Road, Charleston, SC 29412, Phone: 843-762-4022; e-mail is BP2004Gathering@aol.com.



GRANTS WRITER

A volunteer is also needed who has had experience in writing grants and would have an interest in helping to write one or more for BP/USA to help us obtain funds to continue to keep our costs at a minimum for newsletters, gatherings and other projects. If you qualify, please contact our Treasurer. Dave Hurley at 3805 West San Juan St., Tampa, FL 33629 or by e-mail at: david.hurley@gte.net.

NOMINATIONS TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

In July of 2004, Betty Ewart and Mary Murphy, Chapter Representative members of the Board of Directors for 6 years (the limit that a person may serve) will "retire". We are looking for nominations of persons with a real interest in BP/USA who have the time to give to being a member of the board. These persons need to be able to attend 2 meetings a year (one in Oct. and one at the Gathering), be able to give time to projects during the year and should have an e-mail address or a fax for communication amongst the Board. The Member at Large Representative must be elected each year also with the same qualifications. If you have someone you would like to nominate for any of these positions, please send the name to the Chair, Mitch Dudnikov, One Farrington Court, Baltimore, MD 21209 or by email to Pat Moser, PatLMoser@aol.com or Cathy Bender, cbthree3@sol.com.



BOOK

VIEWS

RE-

This quarter we received two books to review from one author. These are TORN FROM OUR ARMS and UNLACED SHOES by Dan Bryan. TORN FROM OUR ARMS is the story of Dan and his wife as they struggle with their grief when their 29 year old son is killed in a traffic accident. UNLACED SHOES is a book of poetry which Dan writes expressing their pain and heartache. Both books have a Christian focus since their son was active in the Christian Athletes and about to begin his full-time ministry and are the story of their journey through the grieving process in which they feel that God's love surrounded them and carried them. These books are available by contacting Dan in Chillicothe, Missouri at 660-646-4281 (work) or at 660-646-5220 (home).

By Doug Manning

From "Don't Take My Grief Away"

We don't have closure; we have times of growing reality. Reality does not come all at once. We must gradually come to grips with our loss. We go through a time of real but not real. We know it has happened but we still think it is a dream and we will soon awake.

Reality develops gradually through many experiences. It grows in those times when we face a little bit more of our loss, and reality becomes more vivid. Viewing a loved one, the funeral, the first visit to the cemetery, cleaning out the closets, cleaning out the room, all of these are steps toward reality and toward coping. They are not the closing of a door nor opening a new door. They are just tiny steps toward deciding to live again and learning to cope.

NO VACATION

Kathy Boyette, Gulf Coast, MS

There is no vacation from your absence.

Every morning I awake,
I am a bereaved parent.
Every noon I feel the hole in my heart,
Every evening my arms are empty.

My life is busy now, but not quite full.
My heart is mended, but not quite healed.

For the rest of my life, every moment
will be lived without you.

There is no vacation from your absence.

FOR GRANDPARENTS...

My tribute to Justin
By Grandma Rappi

From Friends & Families of
Murder Victims Newsletter

You used to come to our home to stay;
I loved to watch you run and play.
Then you'd hide from me and I'd call out in fear and a little voice'd whisper, "Grandma. I'm right here."

We'd go to the park or school, side by side – you played on the carousel, swing or slide. Sometimes you'd disappear and I'd call, "Justin, dear," and a little voice'd whisper, "Grandma, I'm right here."

Off we'd go and maybe sing, "This Little Light of Mine" or the "Achy Breaky" thing. And stop by Circle K for your thumb sucking ring. You'd hide behind the candy rack and I'd call, "Justin, dear" and a little voice'd whisper, "Grandma, I'm right here."

We'd go on home for a bite to eat – peanut butter or hot dogs to you was a treat. Then we'd go out and play 'till we couldn't see, then come in the house to watch TV. You'd crawl on my lap; I'd whisper in your ear and a little voice'd whisper, "Grandma, I'm right here."

I know you don't want me to be sad or shed a tear, but what I'd give once more to hear that little voice whisper, "Grandma, I'm right here."



LIVING REMEMBRANCES

Earl Grollman

From LIVING WHEN A LOVED ONE
HAS DIED

At one time, men built
palaces of stone,
elaborate mausoleums,
as their way of commemorating
their dead.

There are other ways to perpetuate
the memory of your loved one.
Through your own life
you can prolong the memory.

Death brings you a choice.
It can lead you
to the edge of the abyss.
Or you can build a bridge that will
span the chasm.

Your love is still part of your life.

Whatever it was that
made your beloved dear to you,
you can make real for others.

The memory of the dead
can indeed outlast
the monuments we erect for them.

From: THE SORROW AND THE LIGHT

By Sascha

*Good memories
are the perennials
that bloom again
after the hard winter of grief
begins to yield to hope.*



WHEN YOU SEE A BUTTERFLY

By Brytani Russell, Tampa, FL

When you see a butterfly,
Think of me.

When you see a shadow,
Don't be afraid.

When you see a light,
Think of good things.
But when you see a butterfly,
Think of me.

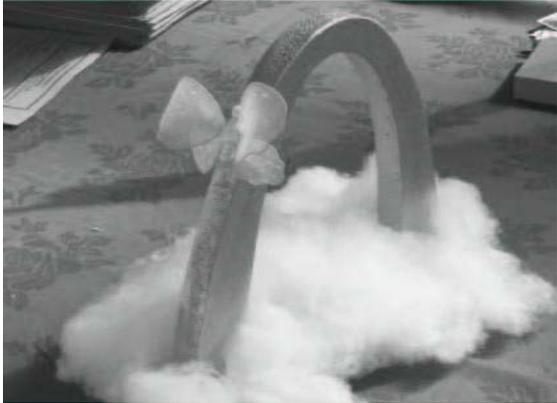
When you see a cloud,
Don't be afraid to try and grab it.
When you see a raindrop,
Open our mouth,
Let it fall in.

When you feel a hand touch you,
Don't jump away.
When you get all tingly,
Let the feeling last.
when you feel loved,
Cherish it forever,
But when you see a butterfly,
Think of me.

When you feel like no one is there,
Make sure you know I am.
When you feel like I am gone forever,
Make sure you feel like I am there.
When you think you've grieved too much,
I know there's always another tear.
But when you see a butterfly,
Think of me.

For you know that I am always with
you,
In every way, shape and form.
I am always there to protect you,
Even through dangerous storms.
Know that I am right behind you,
In whatever fate decides to
Put you through.
For I may be gone,
But I am around,
So when you see a butterfly,
Know I'm always there.

- 2003 Gathering -



Gateway to Healing Centerpiece



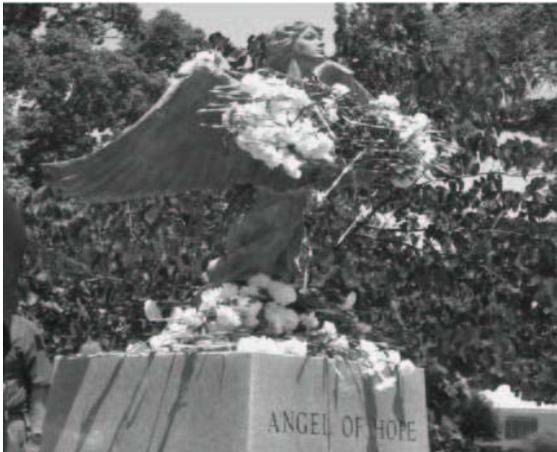
Central Arkansas Chapter



Tampa Bay Chapter



Thanks, John Goodrich



Angel of Hope and Flower for Our Children



See you in Charleston in 2004. Dolly Criswell, Chairperson

BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Shirley & Robert Ottman
Shirley & Robert Ottman
Renee & Mitchell Dudnikov
Renee & Mitchell Dudnikov
BP/USA: Baltimore Metro Chapter
BP/USA of Louisville, Inc.
BP/USA of Louisville, Inc.
TCF of Los Angeles
BP/USA St. Louis Chapters and members

BP Chapters, individuals & others

Keynote Speakers, Workshop &
Sharing Group Leaders
John & Therese Goodrich

In Loving Memory of Paul Kinney
In Loving Memory of Jimmie Sou Hartwig
In Loving Memory of Marc Dudnikov
In Loving Memory of Cynthia van Roden
In Loving Memory of the Children of the Chapter
In Loving Memory of Paul Kinney
In Loving Memory of the Children of the Chapter
In Loving Memory of the Children of the Chapter
The Gathering was done in Memory of the Children of the
Chapters, groups and individual members
Contributions to the Gathering Brochure and other programs
In Loving Memory of their children
In Loving Memory of their children
Printing of a Brochure in loving memory of their daughter,
Paula Marie Goodrich

If your donation should appear on this list, and does not, we apologize. As you know, we have had a change of Treasurers and now have a new one so something may have been overlooked unintentionally. If you will notify the Treasurer of the gift and the memorial, we will acknowledge it in the next Newsletter. Thank you.

Our new 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 carried on entirely by contributions. All the leaders, National and local, are volunteers. Donations go directly to help chapters, help in the sending of the Newsletter, help in keeping costs of the Gathering as low as possible and to help in the contacting of persons in need of our help. 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 listed. We thank our chapters, individual members and other friends for their generous support of BP/USA and its work.

LIVING REMEMBRANCES

Earl Grollman: LIVING HEN A LOVED ONE HAS DIED

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as their way of commemorating their dead.

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Or you can build a bridge that will span the chasm.

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you can make real for others,

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