



A JOURNEY TOGETHER

NEWSLETTER OF THE BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

VOLUME IX NO. 3, Summer 2004
(July, August & September)

ALL THERE IS LEFT TO DO

Betty R. Ewart, Editor
BP/USA

This is a theme newsletter! I have never done anything like this before but a theme seems to have run through some of the last weeks that really had meaning for me. I hope it will for you too.

It started when I saw a grieving father on TV. His daughter had been part of a massive search and was found, dead. His comment to a reporter was that the wondering and waiting was over. He said, "All there is left now is to make her proud of me."

I was reminded of a message that a Bishop in our church sent to me when our Ruthie died. It was a suggestion to read a certain old testament passage. It dealt with King David. He cried and tore his clothes when the child was dying but arose and bathed and began to function again after the child died. When asked why this was, King David said, "He will not come to me again but I will go to him."

A father whose son had been killed in Iraq said in an interview, when asked what he would do now, that he would be searching for a "new normal because there will never be the old normal again."

Several of the articles in this newsletter say the same thing in different ways. We all have our period of mourning – our time of great grief. And we will all have recurring grief the

the rest of our lives. But there comes a time for us all that we decide how to go on with the life we have left without our child.

I receive so many books to read and review. The ones that deal with the terrible times of grief can be helpful especially in showing us that we are not alone in our feelings. But the truly great books are those that then show us some ways to go on and some hope for the future.

As Lisa Beall says in her article on page 5, "...it will become something that you do for yourself and for your child—a true labor of love!. I have said so many times that I write and talk to people and work for BP/USA because of Ruthie and for her. Our lives are truly changed for ever and for the better if we will let them be changed that way.

THE FIVE PEOPLE YOU MEET IN HEAVEN is a novel that has been on the best seller list for a long time. I think largely because it has a lot to say to the human condition and the meaning of life and the hope that someday we will know the answer to the question, "Why did this happen to me?"

The book tells us "Live has to end – love doesn't." And regarding our relationships with others, "...each affects the other and the other affects the next, and the world is full of stories, but the stories are all one."

So, I hope this newsletter and its messages will help you to find your new normal and to continue to make your child (children), grandchildren or brother or sister proud of you and what you do!

THREE DOORS

Pat Dickerman
Hacienda Heights, California

The first door was the death. It slammed shut, was locked and sealed. It separated me from my loved one. It was a heavy, cold steel door. I can never open it. It leaves me alone outside.

The second door swings open and beckons me to come inside. It leads to all my memories of our life together. At first, the door is wide open as I spend most of my time back inside reliving every precious moment – the sad memories, the bad memories and, thank goodness, the very special good memories.

Gradually I spend less time there but often I return to the second door. Sometimes I find myself spending a lot of time there. Sometimes I chuckle and leave, appreciative and happy for the experiences we shared. The second door will always remain slightly open. It will always be welcoming me back in time. The more I heal, the more I walk away from the second door and toward the third door.

The third door is stiff. It is hard to open. It opens slowly. It is scary inside when I first open it but each time I try to open this door, it becomes easier to open. Inside, I find rays of hope. Beyond are many paths, many choices. As time passes, I feel more comfortable entering. Gradually, the third door opens wider and I find myself able to explore all that is within. Soon the paths take me in many directions.

The third door opens up to my new life

**BEREAVED PARENTS OF
THE USA**

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<http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org>

PHONE

Please note that the phone number for BP/USA has changed. The phone is located at the home of John and Therese Goodrich with an answering service. When they are away, calls will be forwarded to a Board member.

Keep this number handy and feel free to give it to anyone needing our help.

REMEMBER:

708-748-7866



**FROM THE
EDITOR**

Betty R. Ewart

With great sadness we must tell you that Mitch Dudnikov died on April 27, 2004. His ashes will be spread on the same mountain in Washington state where their beloved son Marc's were spread.

Mitch and Renee, his wife of almost 55 years, have been such a source of support and help to the bereaved in the Metropolitan Baltimore area and a vital part of that BP/USA Chapter. They joined in 1978 when their son, Marc, died. He and Renee spoke to groups in the area and were always sending packets to newly bereaved and following up with them. They were "founding Fathers" of BP/USA and great supporters of our work. Mitch was on the Board of Directors and had headed the Nomination Committee for the last two years working tirelessly to be assured that the leadership of BP/USA would continue strong. His humor and the devotion he and Renee had was a source of inspiration to us all. We shall miss him very much. We know Renee will carry on their work.

As this Newsletter goes to press, we are very near the Gathering time. We are looking forward to seeing many of you again. The hotel is filled and we are referring people to other hotels nearby. Dolly, Pat and the committee have spent much time preparing speakers and workshops that will be of great help to us all.

The Annual Meeting of BP/USA will be held as a part of the Gathering. Anyone who can not be there having anything they would like discussed or said may contact any of the Board members through the website or the phone numbers listed in the column to the left. If you wish minutes or copies of reports also contact a Board member. We want you to feel a part of BP/USA and feel that your opinions are important to us.

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 30-August 1: These are the dates for the TCF 2004 National Conference. For information, send a #10 self addressed envelope to TCF 2004 National Conference, PO Box 33204, Granada Hills, CA 9194.

August 5-8: 18th Annual National Conference of Parents of Murdered Children, Inc. This will be held at the Hotel Pere Marquette, in Peoria, Illinois For information call POMC, Inc. at 888-818-7662.

Dec. 24-25: In Loving Memory will not have their Sept. conference this year. Instead, there will be a gathering at the Chaparnal Suites in Scottsdale, AZ. There will be a keynote speaker on the 24th, dinner and sharing sessions. On the 25th there will be an author book display and signings and workshops. At 1 p.m. there will be a trip to see 25 decorated Christmas homes. The room price is \$89 per night with a full breakfast and the registration fee is \$35 per person or \$60 per couple. For more information contact Sandy Fox at 480-595-1503 or at sfoxaz@hotmail.com or Kay Bevington at alivalon@bright.net.

The beautiful wildflowers that burst forth in the spring have inspired a host of stories in many cultures. – myths that describe the flowers' origins and uses.

A Shoshone Indian legend even explains the existence of all wildflowers: "Wild blooms are the footprints of little children who have died and come back to gladden us."

Elizabeth Silverthorne
Texas Highways, April 1999

From Denton Texas BP/USA
Newsletter

LOOKING FOR MATTHEW

Donna Miles, Maryland
BP/USA Anne Arundel County
Chapter

Where were you, little one,
When the earth was bursting with
new life?
When the colors and fragrances were
fresh
and new?
When I longed to take you outside
And let the warm breeze kiss your
cheek?

Where were you, little one,
When the days grew long and hot?
When we should have lain under the
tree
And looked up in wonder at the
swaying leaves?
When I would have tickled your nose
with a leaf
And watched your chubby fingers
grab it?

Where were you, little one
When the days grew short and the
air turned cold?
When the first white flakes began to
fall and
I could let you touch them and laugh
with delight?

Where were you, little one,
When my arms were empty and ach-
ing for you?

You were where you have always
been, and will always be, in my
heart.

Love Mommy



CARRY ON

David Heimlich
BP/USA Springfield IL Chapter

*“One morning I woke up and I knew
you were gone. A new day, a new say.
I knew I could see the dawn. Gone
away a poor man. Carry on.”*
(Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young)

These words are from a song written for a love lost. They are so poignant to my situation. John’s death has altered my life forever. I’d give anything for the old days, the old ways, but I know bargaining is useless. What’s dawning? I feel something coming through. I don’t know what it is. With gratitude, I go away a poor man. I don’t have the desires I had before. I want to simplify my life, become “poor in spirit.” I chased so many empty desires and dead-end dreams. I’ve awakened to what is really important: Love, Sharing, Silence, Simplicity, Intensity, Urgency, Constancy. Happiness is *what* I am, not *who* I am. I’ve always been more focused on how I was being perceived, rather than simply allowing myself to receive the world. And I missed one of its most precious gifts: my son.

Oh, I was a good dad, but I spent too much time at the office. Too much time wrapped up in myself to really see the red headed miracle before me. I spent the last morning of John’s life in the basement exercising while he watched Power Rangers without his favorite buddy. Late for work, I gave him the most cursory of kisses on my way out of the house – not knowing it would be our last. No last looks. No more time together. And now, I must carry on: the memory of our last moment together, a hurried blur. I looked at him so intensely as he lay lifeless, still warm, on the cold metal table in the trauma room. I held his little hand with the dirt under his nails from the morning’s play. I asked his forgiveness for not holding him when

when I had the chance, when he wanted me. And now I live without him.

But I love so much better now, self forgiving, trying to pay attention to what is truly important and discarding the superfluous. Now I give my wife and daughter, my family and friends, the first fruits of John’s gift to me.

“Rejoice! Rejoice! We have no choice but to “Carry On.”

GRIEF CONQUERED

Shirley Ottman
From THE SLENDER THREAD

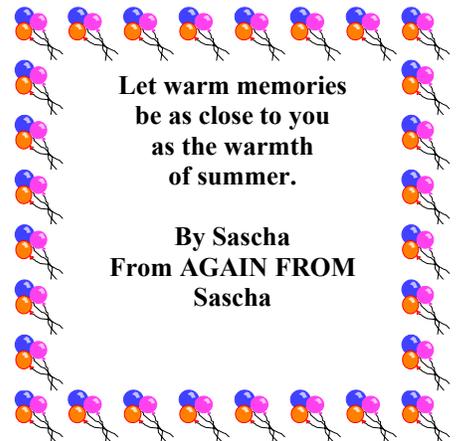
We once walked arm in arm,
our whispers sparkling while we
spun joyous memories. Suddenly you
left.

Now I must walk alone, I thought.
Then I discovered that we still are
one.

Your spirit lives inside me, and
around me,
and induces my encumbered feet
to dance in spite of my own heavy
heart—

in tempo *now* with your remembered
laughter and
the certitude of us forever.

Yesterday I put away tomorrows.
Today we’re living freely new.



Let warm memories
be as close to you
as the warmth
of summer.

By Sascha
From AGAIN FROM
Sascha



BOOK RE-VIEWS

THE FIVE PEOPLE YOU MEET IN HEAVEN by Mitch Albom is the book I mentioned on the front page of this newsletter. It is available in book stores or on line. Although not what we think of as a “grief book” it has many helpful insights.

HOPE IS LIKE THE SUN by Lisa Church is a book that is helpful for those grieving after miscarriage, still-birth or infant death. In the past, hospitals did not allow families to see, hold and mourn a stillborn or infant who died at birth. Although that has changed most places, there is still much lack of understanding of this type of grief. This book follows along a support group format with workbook type sections and gives many helpful lists of suggestions. It is available from HopeXchange Publishing, Hampton, VA; their website is: www.HopeXchange.com.

BUT SHOULD THE ANGELS CALL FOR HIM: A Mother’s Journey Through Grief and Discovery is by Glenda Pearson. It includes letters from her sons teachers and friends. She encourages people to talk to others and share ideas to help to heal. She says, “I found the greatest reason to be in these groups was the TALKING!” Copies are available from Xlibris Corp. 1-999-795-4274; website: www.Xlibris.com.

COMMUNE WITH THE ANGELS, DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ANGELS, and ANGELS BY MY SIDE are three books by Jayne Howard-Feldman which deal with the Angels around us and the help they can be to us. The books contain humor as well as personal experiences with angels. For those wanting to know more about angels there is a wealth of information in these books. For information contact her at 1-866-732-2328 or by e-mail at earthangel4peace@aol.com.

FORGIVE ME MY DAUGHTER

From the SIDS Survival Guide
By Joani Nelson Horchler &
Robin Rice Morris

I want you to be the little girl
who tore her many layered
petticoats on the parallel bars or in
school and once even chipped
a tooth.

I want you, too, to be the child
with bloody knees who had match-
ing holes in her new leotards.

Or maybe the one who fell from a
swing and needed a half dozen
stitches beneath her eye.

Oh, I could hold you then,
there was magic in my kisses that
stemmed the pain and a doctor
nearby for more tangible aid.

But what do I do now, now that you
are a woman and your sorrows are
commensurate with your age?

I stand immobile as your wan face
leans over the broken turf where
your infant son, your only child,
will soon be interred.

I clench my fists knowing
there is no solace any longer in my
arms for agony of this magnitude.

You are deaf, too, to my murmurings,
you hear only the echoes of his
laughter and his cries.

Of course,
I am here when you need me.

But I can only pretend I am a strong
and wise grandmother when, in
truth,
I remain a mother, heart-broken
twice.

(From the BP/USA Orange County
Chapter Newsletter on Sept. 2002)

FOR GRANDFATHERS

By Margaret H. Gerner
From “For Bereaved Grandparents”

If you are a bereaved grandfather,
you may have special difficulty griev-
ing the loss of a grandchild for two
reasons. First, your grief is mini-
mized by people who don’t consider
a grandfather/grandchild relation-
ship to be very significant. Secondly,
like most men, you have probably
been taught to keep your feelings in-
side.

When a child dies, the concern of
others is first for the mother, then
the father, occasionally some will be
expressed for the grandmother. Rarely
do people recognize that you are
hurting too. When you weep or
express pain, even among family and
friends, your behavior may be ques-
tioned. You may feel embarrassed. A
grandfather isn’t expected to be up-
set. He is expected to concern him-
self with his children and his wife.

Once I saw a grown man cry.
“Now there goes a man with feeling!”
said I.

He was strong, able, quite well-built,
with muscles, gray hair and charm to
the hilt.

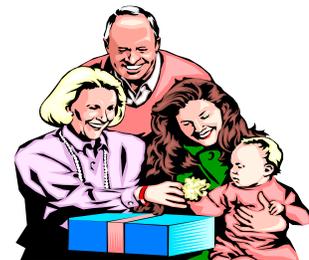
I moved toward him slowly and said,
“What’s wrong?”

The look he gave me was tear-filled
and long.

“I cry for a child.

My grandchild has died.”

So I sat beside him and
two grown men cried.



September 12 is Grandparents Day! Remember the bereaved grandparents too.

Excerpt From:
**WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN
TO GOOD PEOPLE** Harold S.
Kushner.

From the Newsletter of the Tampa
Bay Chapter of BP/USA
By Beverley Bray Hurley
Mother to Deborah Ann Bray

While I was trying to meet the challenge of being a caretaker for my daughter Debbie during her short and painful three month battle with cancer, I had the privilege to attend a Workshop for Caretakers by Rabbi Kushner. At this workshop I purchased a book written by him and I found much Strength and understanding in the following excerpt that I so desperately needed to help me deal with the forthcoming death of Debbie. I hope this will help you to find some strength and understanding in dealing with your great loss!

“The facts of life and death are neutral. We, by our responses, give suffering either a positive or a negative meaning. Illness, accidents, human tragedies kill people. But they do not necessarily kill life or faith. If the death and suffering of someone we love makes us bitter, jealous, against all religion and incapable of happiness, we turn the person who died into one of the “devil’s martyrs.” If suffering and death in someone close to us brings us to explore the limits of our capacity for strength and love and cheerfulness, if it leads us to discover sources of consolation we never knew before, then we make the person into a witness for the affirmation of life rather than its rejection.

“This means....that there is one thing we can still do for those we loved and lost. We could not keep them alive. Perhaps we could not even significantly lessen their pain. But the one crucial thing we can do for them after their death is to let them be witnesses for God and for life, rather than, by our despair and loss of faith, making them “the devil’s martyrs.” The dead depend on us for their redemption and their immortality.

“First of all, God has created a world in which many more good things than bad things happen. We find life’s disasters upsetting not only because they are painful but because they are exceptional. Most people wake up on most days feeling good. Most illnesses are curable. Most airplanes take off and land safely. Most of the time, when we send our children out to play, they come home safely. The accident, the robbery, the inoperable tumor are life-shattering exceptions; But they are very rare exceptions.

“When you have been hurt by life, it may be hard to keep that in mind. When you are standing very close to a large object, all you can see is the object. Only by stepping back from it can you also see the rest of its setting around it. When we are stunned by some tragedy, we can only see and feel the tragedy. Only with time and distance can we see the tragedy in the context of a whole life and a whole world.

“ In the Jewish tradition, the special prayer known as the Mourners’ Kaddish is not about death, but about life, and it praises God for having created a basically good and livable world. By reciting that prayer, that mourner is reminded of all that is good and worth living for. There is a crucial difference between denying the tragedy, insisting that everything is for the best and seeing the tragedy in the context of a whole life, keeping one’s eye and mind on what has enriched you and not only on what you have lost.”



LABOR DAY

Lisa Beall, BP/USA
Anne Arundel Chapter
Annapolis, MD

On Monday, September 6, many of us will enjoy a day off work, usually in the company of friends and family, cooking burgers on the grill. It is Labor Day – a day to honor all working people. As parents, our “labor” begins at the birth of our child, an experience you are not likely to forget. But the pain has a wonderful purpose and so we don’t mind too much. Some of us labor in vain to conceive but are blessed with a child through adoption. As our children grow, we labor constantly – giving them the guidance, nourishment and emotional support they need to develop into caring and concerned adults.

But, along the way, our labor increases one hundred-fold. Now we labor in our grief and oh how we labor! Such exertion we have never known before in our lives. The things that came so easily before the death of our children are now so difficult – like reading the newspaper, making dinner, conversing in social groups – it is all just too much effort with too few rewards. And it can stay that way for a long time. Most of your energy is going into absorbing the impact of your child’s death on your life.

Fortunately, most of us reach the point of a new kind of labor. We find new fulfillment in our family, a special cause, work that is important to us, and many times, in helping other people. We are growing and making something good come of the rest of our lives. It is the choice that we finally feel free to make. So, as you labor, let me assure you that it will become easier and, when you are ready, it will become something that you do for yourself and for your child – a true labor of love!

I ONCE WAS YOU

Colleen M. Fledderman

From the Winnipeg TCF Newsletter

I have never met Carlie Bruce's mother, Nicole-Brown Simpson's mother, Polly Klass' mother, Princess Dianna's mother, Carolyn Besette Kennedy's mother or Laci Peterson's mother. But I know them intimately. I know what dwells in their hearts and souls everyday. I live their sadness, sorrow, and pain every second of everyday. Like them, I buried my daughter.

What am I now? Am I a daughterless mother? That sounds like an oxymoron, two words that contradict themselves. My eighteen year old daughter, Amy Marie, died on May 25, 2001. My life is forever changed. Burying a daughter is a surreal experience. There are no words in Webster's Dictionary that can explain the grief, the heartache, the pain, the depression, or the anguish. Heartbroken is too small a word. The words don't exist because it is not supposed to happen. There are no plausible definitions that could accurately describe "bereaved parent." Groups of words can't be strung together on a typed page to accurately explain the grief. It is impossible to bury your child, yet it happened.

Logically, the factual part of my brain processed the information. The emotional part of my brain argues with the fact everyday. Each and every morning it is still a shock to my entire being! I still peek into her bedroom and expect to find the perfectly made bed a mess of jumbled covers with my daughter snuggled deep inside of them. Parents don't bury children! Headstones read "loving mother," "cherished wife." They don't read "beloved daughter." That is not the natural order of the universe. This was not supposed to happen to me. It always happens to other people. I see reports on the evening news. Articles in the newspapers describe horrific events that

resulted in the death of someone's child. It isn't supposed to be my child. How can this be changed? It can't be changed. I can't say, "Amy, want to go to the mall?" "Let's go out to lunch." She can't tell me about her "freaking bio test" that she has to study for all night long.

Things I want to say to her are forever left unspoken. How will I go on? I can't go on, yet I do. My body wakes up each day. I don't ask for this to happen, it just does. My lungs take in air, it is automatic, something that I have no control over. My physical body now controls the course of events in my life. I breathe, I eat, I walk, I talk, I put one foot in front of the other. I load the washer and I shop for food. I can work, I can teach. I can think on the job about the job. My spiritual being merely exists. It cannot flourish or soar ever again.

When my daughter died, my emotional self was buried with her. When she died, I also buried her future husband-to-be, my future grandchildren, my daughter's future wedding, my daughter's college graduation ceremony, my holidays, and my joys. I buried my best friend. I buried the once perfect life that I knew and lived everyday. Tucked into the corner of Amy's casket is my happy husband. My despondent bereaved husband now lives with me. I buried my fifteen year old daughter's future matron of honor. I buried the loving aunt that Amy would be go her sister's and brother's children. I buried Renee's future nieces and nephews. There is not enough room in Amy's casket for all the things that died with her. Dreams, hopes, joys, lives, emotions, hearts and souls slipped into that casket with Any. They occupy every square inch of that place. One day my fifteen year old daughter will be older than her older sister. Can my brain ever understand that? Renee will have a nineteenth birthday; Amy did not. How can the impossible happen?

Bereaved parents go on. We go on because we have no other road to travel. It is just that we are not "normal" any more. We used to be you. We used to be PTO moms and girl-scout leaders. We bought lovely, frilly, fancy holiday dresses for our daughters. We stood in long lines singing along with Christmas carols while we waited to check out the perfect holiday gifts for our daughters. We were once carpool moms and soccer moms. We sat at music recitals and listened to the first melodious squeaks and squawks of their instruments. Forgotten homework assignments were rushed to school for our children. In our heads, we planned our beautiful daughter's future weddings. Visions of the bridal gown and the reception danced in our heads. We couldn't wait to have grandchildren to baby-sit and to enjoy. We wanted to tell our daughters that their children were just like them! Our daughter's christening gown is carefully preserved and awaiting to be worn by her own children. We wanted to hold our grandchildren's chubby little fingers in our hands and remember holding our daughter's chubby little fingers in our hands.

We used to answer the telephone and hear, "Hey mom, what's up?" Now the phone doesn't ring. And it will never ring again with that sweet voice we so desperately would love to hear. Now we are set apart. We are not normal any more. People look at us differently. They might take an extra minute to look at us then quickly walk past us in the supermarket. They may choose to walk down a different aisle to ignore us. It is too painful for them to think about our lives. They might take a moment to wonder how we go on. They say, "I can only imagine your pain." That is not true. No one can imagine it unless they live it. We live it and still we don't understand it. We now belong to a new group. We never wanted to be part of this group, bereaved parents. No one lines up for this membership. We wish our membership would never grow. I am glad you are not me.

BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Marion County BP/USA Chapter	In Loving Memory of Mitch Dudnikov
Pete & Pat Moser	In Loving Memory of Mitch Dudnikov
Jack & Betty Ewart	In Loving Memory of Mitch Dudnikov
John & Therese Goodrich	In Loving Memory of Mitch Dudnikov
Shirley & Bob Ottman	In Loving Memory of Mitch Dudnikov
David & Beverly Hurley	In Loving Memory of Mitch Dudnikov
Mary Murphy	In Loving Memory of her brother, Pat Murphy
Donald & Helen Powell	In Loving Memory of their son, Gene
Col. Dayton & Helen Robinson	In Loving Memory of Sonny Robinson, John Hubert Robinson, Paula Goodrich & Tracy Saulisbury
Renee Dudnikov	In Loving Memory of son Marc
Lee & Karen Story	In Loving Memory of their son, Lee R. Story
Baltimore Metropolitan Chapter of BP	In Loving Memory of their children for the 2004 Gathering
Dan & Donna Davis	In Loving Memory of Tim Smith, son of Morris & Debby Smith

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.



These pictures are of the bench which BP/USA placed in the memorial garden of the Louisville Chapter, TCF of Louisville, Inc. Paul was instrumental in developing this beautiful garden at the Louisville Zoo. He was one of our "Founding Fathers", holding our first two Gatherings in Louisville. He later became our Treasurer and did so many other things to help BP/USA. We are pleased to place this memorial to him, funded by gifts of members of BP/USA and hope that Pat and their family will think of how much he meant to us too whenever they visit the garden and see the bench.