



A JOURNEY TOGETHER

NATIONAL NEWSLETTER OF THE BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

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(July, August & September)

FROM PT TO ME

By Prentice T. Minner
Southern Nevada BP/USA Chapter
In memory of his son, PT

Daddy, I feel something is wrong
Cause when I want to crawl,
I'm not so strong.

All the doctors that attend me,
Sometimes I feel scared.
Can't you see?

So, Daddy, I know something's wrong
Cause sometimes you cry
When you sing "Summer Time",
My favorite song.

And sometimes, when you hold me so tight
And I hear you cry in the middle of the night,
You are always talking to someone
But the person is never in sight.

There is a song you sing to this person,
I can't quite understand,
But the words sound something like,
"Precious Lord Take My Hand."

And Daddy, it scares me and sometimes makes me sad
When I think, "Will I ever be able to take a walk in the park?
And will I be able to laugh when I scare you in the dark?"
Will I ever be able to play football?
And anxiously wait for your call
To say it's ok for me to come home late
After I have gone out on a date.

Will I hear and see the joy
When you call me your "Sweet little drummer boy."
I suppose only God knows and understands
And God only holds the me in the palm of his hands.

Many of you have met Prentice at our Gatherings and heard him sing,
in his great voice, some of the songs that his son loved,
especially "Summer Time." PT died in Prentices' arms
as he sang that song to him.

A LITTLE FARTHER DOWN THE ROAD

By Alan Pedersen in memory of his
daughter, Ashley Marie Pederson

I know those tears you're crying.
I've been in your shoes.
You feel like there's no use in trying,
Like there's nothing left to lose.
You take one step forward,
Move two steps back.
You may not see it now
But it won't always be like that.

A little farther down the road,
You'll see the sun again.
A little farther down the road,
You'll look back at where you've been.
You'll see how far you've come
And you'll find the strength to go
A little farther down the road.

This journey is not easy.
It's a winding road
Filled with twists and turns.
You can make it, believe me.
In time you'll learn
Your greatest love comes
From your deepest pain.
And there's power in that love
To help you rise again.

A little farther down the road,
You'll see the sun again.
A little farther down the road,
You'll look back at where you've been.
You'll see how far you've come
And you'll find the strength to go
A little farther down the road.

Alan will be at the 2007 Gathering and
sing some of his songs on Thursday night.



**BEREAVED PARENTS OF
THE USA**

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For other information, contact
Bereaved Parents of the USA
PO Box 95
Park Forest, IL 60466
Phone & Fax: 708-748-7866

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The editor of the Newsletter is
Betty R. Ewart
BP/USA Newsletter
326 Longview Ave.
Lewisburg, WV 24901
E-mail:
newsletters@bereavedparentsusa.org



**FROM THE-
DESK OF
THE
EDITOR**

Where do you do your reading about grief and what others have gone through these days?? I find I am reading daily in the USA Today, PEOPLE magazine, TIME, local newspapers and other publications. Every day there are interviews with grieving families and talk shows dealing with these families and their grief on the TV news and specials.

Maybe some of you remember, as I do, when, years ago when our child died, we looked frantically for articles, support, anything to help. We found few books and even fewer references to the grieving process in any media.

Then came Oklahoma City, Columbine, 9/11, Virginia Tech, and, of course, Iraq and the daily death of young men and women. Now we see articles on the front pages but also on the sports pages, entertainment sections of papers and on all the news programs and many special programs.

We live near Virginia Tech and many we know attended there or have children there so we were especially moved by all that happened there. We were also interested to see about the T.A.P.S. conference and read what they do for the families of lost service personnel. We were fortunate to be offered a chance to present some of our materials and have a booth at their conference over Memorial Day Weekend. We were represented there by Dave Alexander from the Chapter in Annapolis and he reports the opportunity to talk to many people and hand out materials to them.

A picture of a mother at the grave of her son in Arlington National Cemetery, writing to him and visiting with him. I also was touched to read that, often, mothers will be tending the graves there and another mother will just come over and hug them and they don't even need to say anything, the article said—they understand!

The article also reported that many of these mothers have arranged to get together regularly and just talk and share what they are going through and find, of course, that they are having similar experiences. Sounds like a lot of little BP/USA groups! Parents came from Oklahoma City, Columbine and the places affected by 911 to offer hope and to help the grieving to understand that they are normal and that it will get better in time although they will never get over it or forget. They also show that one way to deal with one's own grief is to reach out to others.

Hear some of their comments from an article by Richard Wolf and Wendy Koch for USA TODAY about Virginia Tech: "All we have are memories and our pictures." "You go into shock." "There's no set order for this type of grieving. It's kind of an ebb and flow. They may feel anger, then depression and then back to anger. There's no completion date." And from an article by Gregg Zoroya in USA TODAY on Memorial Day Weekend "For us it's pretty painful. We want to share our grieving." "Somebody who has this kind of loss wants to feel that they're not going crazy and that someone understands." "You have good days. You have bad days. But you come here and you're always pretty much going to run into somebody who's going to help. It's just no more than listening or it's a hug."

It is heartening to know that people understand better now and help one another. As one mother said, "It's a club nobody wants to be in. But here we are. So we look after each other." We are part of an organization that is part of that group no one wants to join but we can be proud to be able to help others now in the name of our loved ones.



MEMORIES OF LOVED ONES

By Roy Peterson
A Dear Friend of BP/USA

Absolutely nothing can be as painful as the death of a loved one and our journeys through the valley of the shadow of death leave us little room to do anything other than mourn.

However, somehow we do reach that plateau, that point, that place in time where we resolve to renew our lives, to seek to put everything into perspective. Marlo Thomas (when remembering her father, Danny) said, "it's just not enough to survive—you have to thrive! It doesn't matter whether you are freshly bereaved or whether it happened years ago and you are just coming to terms with the death."

Memories are part of our awesome job of survival and part of healing and restoring ourselves. Our loved ones Have died and our lives have been changed—in ways we hardly ever imagined as possible. "Why?," people ask! "Why do you bring back painful memories? For what purpose? Wouldn't it be better to avoid confusion and forego any need to understand why?"

Am I never again to acknowledge the life and death of someone so precious, so much a part of my waking and sleeping life? How could I not remember? And, even though remembering is disruptive, a loss without memories cannot be possible.

Each month, each week and each day brings us the chance to put that loss in perspective. We need to grab each chance to build memories to help relieve the pain, or at least to change its level of intensity. We believe that whatever pain we bring to gatherings is pain that we share, just as we share with each other our love for our children. Memorial services are such emotional and satisfying activities because they allow us to face and remember our losses; even bittersweet memories can help

us to reorder our lives. The healing that occurs is an important aspect of the restoration of our inner selves.

Eventually it is possible to realize that our loved ones were normal. They were good, indifferent, full of mischief, ambitious or on the road to success or failure. In realizing that they were normal, we start down memory lane. We discover memories lost in the fog of our grief. We unearth long buried treasures.

How awful it must be to be robbed of memories! Not to recall our loved ones as they were would be life's worst blow. Somehow we must reach a place where our love and memories are liberated from the painful emotions linked with the deaths of our loved ones. It is in that liberation that we find an awakening to new possibilities, to new understandings and to growth. As we acknowledge that healing and restoration are occurring, a path out of the depths of despair opens. It is then that we can say "even though our loved ones died—our love for and memories of them will never go away."

Editor's Note: Roy was an inspiration to us all and he and Juanita were a great help to BP/USA, helping chapters get started, providing workshops at Gatherings and just caring for and about individuals. Our special award for those who have served BP/USA on the chapter and national level is named for them and they were the first recipients. These older writings by Roy seemed a good thing to adapt and put in this Newsletter. Juanita will be with us at the 2007 Gathering to present the award to the person/persons chosen to receive it for 2007. We remember Roy and to paraphrase his last words above, our love for and memories of him will never go away.



UPCOMING EVENTS

July 13-15 is the BP/USA Gathering in Chicago. Winds of Healing...Wings of Hope is the theme. For information go to the website, www.bereavedparentsusa.org.

July 20-22 is the TCF Annual Conference in Oklahoma City, OK. For information, check www.compassionatefriends.org.

August 2-5 is the Parents of Murdered Children National Conference, Angels Forever, in Houston, Texas. For information call 1-800-996-3426 or 281-875-2222.

THE LISTENER

By Sascha
From WINTERSUN

I have told you the story,
more than a hundred times

So it seems.

And you have heard me again,
more than a hundred times —

So it seems.

One day, will I be able
to tell you how thankful
I am for your listening,
unfailing friend?

How thankful I am to you
for your quiet attention,
for your sweet understanding,
for your generous heart —

You have made me remember
the meaning of laughter and
hope.
You have made me remember
life
More than a hundred times.

So it seems.



BOOK REVIEWS

GET SAD WHEN SOMEBODY DIES was written by Timony Shinada-Izotov. He was 6 years old when he wrote this to describe his experience at his sister's death. The words and art work are good. His mother sent the book in hopes that it might help other children and help parents talk with their children about the death of a sibling. The publisher is AuthorHouse in Bloomington. It can be bought from www.authorhouse.com.

REMEMBERING OUR ANGELS is a book of stories dealing with pregnancy loss by Hannah Stone. She is a three time survivor of pregnancy loss and has a very complete collection of first person stories of these type losses. The book and these stories should be very helpful for those who have experienced the loss of a child during pregnancy, at birth or soon after. It also contains a list of books and web sites as well as articles by doctors and support persons all of which are helpful. The book is published by LuLu Enterprises in Morrisville, NC and orders can be directed to orders@lulu.com.

MOURNING HAS BROKEN is a book edited by Mara Koven and Liz Pearl. It is a collection of writings and poems that deal with grief and healing. Some writings are by Rabbi Grollman, Darcie Sims, Alan Wolfelt and other well known writers in the field of grief support and resolution. This is a book you can just pick up any time and find something to read that will be helpful and read just one or two poems or articles at a time. The book is published by KOPE Associates in 584 Glencairn Ave., Toronto, Ontario Canada N6B 124.

AND A SWORD SHALL PIERCE YOUR HEART is a book by Charlotte Mathes which deals with how one may move from despair to meaning regarding a death. It is probably

a book best read a little later in the grief journey because it will take concentration but it is well worth the time and effort. She relates death to various scripture readings, stories and myths in ancient religious beliefs as well as Christian, Jewish, Muslim and other faiths. She also has a chapter on different causes of death and relates these other beliefs and readings to those causes. For example, the death of an infant or new born is likened to Rachel in the Bible and her lamentations for the babies she could not have. She also compares sudden and violent deaths to service related deaths and the Gold Star Mothers. Many of her connections are fascinating to read and think about. She writes about the Pieta—the statue of Mary holding the dead Jesus on her lap - and the mourning of a mother for her son. She ends the book with lists of readings, songs, movies and support groups that can be helpful. We would hope that she would add BP/USA to that list when she reprints the book. The book is published by Chiron Publications. You can find out more by going to www.chironpublications.com or by calling 212-414-2275.

RAINBOWS AFTER THE STORM by Sherry Boyd Neu is another small book that can be read in small parts. The readings are good and would be helpful for times when one just needs a short idea to think about. The book is about the journey of a grieving mother. Sherry will present a workshop at the 2007 Gathering and her book will be available there. It is published by Tate Publishing in Mustang, OK at 1-888-361-9473 or www.tatepublishing.com.

MARKINGS ON THE WINDOW-SILL BY Ronald J. Greer is published by Dimensions for Living at PO Box 81 in Nashville, TN and is available from them or Max Communications in Atlanta, GA. They can be reached at 404-447-6242 or at mimi8022@aol.com. The book is also available from Barnes and Noble and Amazon. This is an excellent little book written by a long time friend of Mary Cleckley and she writes the

following book review for us:

Ronald Greer, a bereaved father, an ordained minister and a pastoral counselor for twenty-four years says on the front of his book that it's "A Book About Grief That's Really About Hope," and that's truly what it is all about. Although there are many books available on surviving the death of a child, this book is unique in that she shares with the reader, little by little, step by step, not only his experiences with the death of his two year old son, Eric, but also those experiences that are typical for most bereaved parents. For those caring people who are on the periphery of the tragedy, he offers caution in the words that they use to comfort, for words can either help or hinder the bereaved in their recovery.

This is a very touching book that permeates warmth in its every word. The Rev. Mr. Greer says that he waited quite awhile (over two decades) to write this book. He waited until he had healed more fully so that his eventual efforts spoke the words that would be useful to you, the griever. He made no effort to make light of the pain he experienced as he made his way through the grief and mourning, but, in so doing, he offers the grieving person comforting words that are not the usual words one sometimes hears from those who have not had his experiences.

The Rev. Mr. Greer speaks of his deep religious faith and how it sustained him through his trials but, make no mistake, this is not a book that "preaches"; rather it is most profound in the way one senses having been given the right to feel as he or she does. You will come away from reading this book feeling that you have just shared some important time with a very wise old friend who has helped you in an equally profound way to survive this tragedy.

As he said in the beginning, it really is about hope!

THE INSCRIPTION

By Annabelle Gunnet Jones

“Here lies an American Soldier
Known but to God.”

As I read the words over softly
I said to myself, “How odd!”

For I knew the Unknown Soldier
Ever since he was a lad.
He was just an average boy,
Neither too good nor too bad.
He liked to play ball and marbles,
Climb trees, fish and swim,
Collect moths and arrowheads

I watched him grow to manhood
And fall in love with a fair-haired
lass,

While a half a war-torn world away
The cry was “They shall not pass.”
I was there on the station platform
When he kissed his sweetheart
Goodbye.

There—he started his journey
To a foreign land to die.

Letters came from o’er the billows;

What a story they did tell!

Then — the message —he was
missing

In the Argonne’s flaming hell.
Back across the restless ocean
To his own dear native shore, they
brought his broken body home,
Here to sleep forever more.

Back and forth, the sentry paces
With his firmly shouldered gun,
ever guarding the sleep of the soldier
Called “Unknown” by everyone.

But I know his name, so listen!

While I tell it to everyone.

He’s not an Unknown Soldier
For his mother called him —Son.



LOST IN SPACE

By Deb Kosmer
Shawn’s Mom
Oshkosh, WI

Back in the 1960s there was a popular television show called “Lost in Space.” It was the story of an astronaut family that found themselves shipwrecked on an alien world, unable to get back home and the adjustments and adaptations they had to make in order to survive.

When someone we love has died, we too can feel like we are lost in space as we struggle to find our way back home. The death of our loved one draws an inerasable line between what was and what is, our BD and our AD: before death and after death. The line that is drawn seems to leave us on one side struggling to hold onto the past while the rest of the world remains and continues to move forward on the other side of the line.

Our grief can feel very much like an alien world. All of the things that we once believed are suddenly called into question. The future we thought we had mapped out is shattered, leaving nothing behind but a question mark. Many of the people in our lives, whom we had always depended upon, are absent just like our loved one as we begin to realize that what was the normalcy of our lives, both the good and the bad, has vanished in that instant.

Grief places us on a journey we never signed up to take. It is a journey we must make even though most of our resources have been depleted. Grief robs us of our energy and our capacity to make decisions. It leaves us feeling immobilized, unsure of the route to take and afraid of our destination. It throws out the rules and leaves us to make new ones. As we struggle to find our way, misguided family and friends are often quick to point out that we are going and doing it the wrong way.

After awhile, when we become more tired than afraid, we begin to slowly and cautiously move forward. The road that we take will not be a straight one. Grief has many curves, rest stops, and changes of direction. That does not mean we are doing it wrong. It is just the nature of grief and learning to adapt to the world without our loved one in it. As time passes, we will discover new places and friends. We will begin to reconnect with some of the people we thought had left us behind. Our world will no longer look or feel exactly the same as it was but will not feel as foreign as it has. Eventually we will come to understand that our loved one has made the journey with us through our memories and the unshakable love that we shared. Home, though not the same, is once again a welcoming place, a safe haven, the place where we belong.

WITHOUT YOU

By Babak Kamali
A Bereaved Father

Every morning
I’m looking to see you,
shaking your hands and saying,
“Daddy, what time is it?”

Every noon
my heart stops as I remember
how you dropped on the school
playground.

Every evening, I open
the door,
looking around to see you
and hear
“Hi Daddy.”

Every night
I close my eyelids
in the hope of
seeing you
in my dreams.

I’ve counted and I count
all these days
all these nights
all these lengthy days and nights
each, long as a century.

WHAT ABOUT VACATIONS

By Elaine Stillwell
Rockville Center, NY

When your heart is hurting after the loss of a loved one, you wonder if you will ever be able to “take a vacation” from grief. There are many answers to this question. The secret is to find the right one for you.

Vacations for my family were spent mostly at home. Our work schemes rarely permitted us time to go away and, with three children, we found traveling to be expensive. I have always lived on Long Island (NY) and my parents brainwashed us to think that living on Long Island was a permanent vacation. Do you think they worked for the tourist board?

After my 19 year old daughter, Peggy, and my 21 year old son, Denis, died in the same automobile accident, I never planned a vacation to “get away” from my surroundings. My home was my “nest” and the source of great comfort to me. Not everybody feels this.

Staying with the familiar made me comfortable. Having my support circle nearby was important to me. Enjoying the pleasures that I had shared with Peggy and Denis kept them close to my heart. Even through tears could accompany these pleasures, the tears were healing – whether I was simply walking along the beach where we had many family outings, or sitting by the pool where we had spent so many hours with the swim team or watching a soccer game which took so much of our time with three teams in the family, or noticing their favorite colors, flowers, TV programs, or foods. These things helped reinforce their presence forever in my mind, never to be erased.

Some families agonize whether to go away for a vacation after losing a loved one and some families can't get away fast enough! So you see how different we all are. It's tough for husbands and wives who disagree about vacation plans to find a

reasonable “compromise” to give relief to their individual styles of grieving.

The rule of thumb is: Do what helps you. If taking a cruise or flying to a distant sunny haven, or visiting a mountain or seaside retreat, or just relaxing at a nearby resort helps you gain a moment of peace, do it. But one thing I must caution you about is don't go alone. There is time to reflect or quietly meditate wherever you are but, when you are hurting so terribly, it is not wise to be alone for long periods of time. However, it is good to have someone to share your thoughts with, releasing some of those feelings that are haunting you. Having a good listener with you is wonderful medicine for you.

It's also good to have someone to hug. Remember, you need 4 hugs a day for survival, 8 hugs a day for maintenance and 12 hugs a day for growth. Therefore, make sure you vacation with the right person!

Many grieving families that I have met have found solace in a trip “away” from their home base. Sometimes, just the change is what they need. Other times, it's leaving work or that “empty chair” behind. A little sunshine can warm our souls, so the warmer climates appeal to us and seem to bring an inner cheer. I know I am a “sunshine” person and can accomplish ten times as much on a sunny day. So a sunny vacation would be productive for me.

In my early days of bereavement I found that taking a little photo album like a “grandma's brag book” with me, filled with my favorite pictures of my Peggy and Denis made it feel as if they were with me.

Packing that album in every pocket-book used, whether the large everyday variety or the tiny evening bag, was like a pacifier to me. When a friend of mine told me that she dreaded going on vacation “without her daughter along,” I suggested she take a little picture album, crammed full of her daughter's snapshots, with

her on the trip and she did. When she returned, she called me and happily announced that it had made a difference to her, releasing some of that emptiness she had felt. So, take a chance and try something different to help your heart. You might surprise yourself!

Other bereaved friends could not bear to stay home for major holidays and off they flew to far-away vacation spots. That worked for them, getting away from the hoopla of the holidays and the family gatherings that they did not feel strong enough yet to attend. Some of these bereaved families said they found a respite from their grief while “on vacation” but that coming home was the hardest, causing feelings of depression when they returned. So, we all have to find the balance that fits our lives. It doesn't happen overnight. It's something that requires “trial and error” by us to find the blend that lifts our spirits.

Vacations can be a time of “renewal” for us. We all know that we need a vacation “from grief.” We just have to figure out what kind of vacation our own hearts need.

Good luck!

Note: Elaine is a good friend of BP/USA and will be presenting a workshop at the 2007 Gathering. Her book, THE DEATH OF A CHILD contains many helpful readings like this one. It will be available at the bookstore at the Gathering or from Acta Publications in Chicago through www.actapublications.com.



Sometimes our light goes out, but is blown into flame by an encounter with another human being. Each of us owes the deepest thanks to those who have rekindled this inner light.

Albert Schweitzer

BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

St. Louis Chapter of BP/USA
Cathy Evans
Lee & Karen Story
Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, AL

Pat Kinney
Coeur d'Alene BP/USA Chapter
Jeffrey & Amy Hubert
William & Marguerite Adams
Ann M. Goff
Mary Murphy

In loving memory of Renee Dudnikov
In loving memory of her son, Bill Steiner
In loving memory of their son Lee R. Story
In loving memory David, Ashley and Ann Cook, the
Children of Don & Barbara Cook
In loving memory of Renee Dudnikov
In loving memory of the children of the chapter
In loving memory of their son James Kyle Hubert
In loving memory of their sons Tommy John and Marty
An unrestricted donation
In loving memory of her son Dylan

If we missed listing a donation, we apologize. If you will notify the Treasurer, Dave Hurley, 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 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. Thank you.

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, some copies of our brochures and the quarterly Newsletter without charge to help in the sending of the quarterly Newsletter which sent by mail (to over 400 persons) or e-mail (also over 400 people) at no cost; to help to keep costs of attending the Annual National Gathering as low as possible in order; and to maintain a web site (www.bereavedparentsusa.org) . This web site provides a means to find a chapter, read the newsletters, read special brochures and articles, find information about the Gathering and find links to other organizations serving the bereaved . You may designate a donation to any of these areas or to the general work of the BP/USA or give 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.

LAST CHANCE TO SIGN UP FOR THE 2007 NATIONAL GATHERING OF BP/USA!

Registration Fee is \$25 per person, Maximum of \$60 Per family.

Meals: Complete package only: \$118.00 – 3 meals on Friday and Saturday and breakfast on Sunday.

Rooms: \$89 per night for 2 persons or \$99 for 4. Same price two days before and two days after Gathering. Rooms are filling fast!!! Each family will be responsible for making their own reservations. Reservations must be made directly through the hotel. The hotel phone number is 630-971-2000.

There will be many great speakers and workshops and a chance to talk with other bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings.

For full information and registration materials visit
WWW.BEREAVEDPARENTSUSA.ORG
Or call Donna Corrigan, Gathering Chairman at
630-279-6148.

