



# A JOURNEY TOGETHER

## NEWSLETTER OF THE BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

VOLUME VII NO. 2, SPRING 2002  
(April, May and June)

### HUMOR AND SURVIVAL

By Mary Cleckley  
BP/USA Member at Large

Recently, my daughter paid me one of the highest compliments a bereaved parent can hope to receive. Having made a change in her primary care physician, her new doctor was taking her history and he reached the place where he inquired about her parents' health. He started with me, and my daughter just started laughing and said, "You're not going to believe her history." With that she ran off my litany of woes, both past and present. Her doctor asked if I had gone out looking for things to happen to me. She said she assured him that wasn't the case and she added, "In spite of all of it, she has never lost her sense of humor." Now, I consider that a compliment because I'm sure there were times she couldn't have said that.

I tell you this because, when one of our children dies, we seem to lose other things, as well. One of them seems to be our sense of humor. We are hard put to find things that tickle our funny bone. Life becomes tedious and surviving becomes a deadly serious business. After a few months, when something strikes you as humorous and you laugh, you'll find that the old devil guilt makes his presence known.

If this happened to just a few bereaved parents, you would probably think it was somehow warranted guilt but how do you account for it happening to practically every

bereaved parent? Most of us were good parents who never intentionally did anything that warranted the feeling of guilt, except maybe loving our children too much.

Next time you're tempted to laugh, go ahead! Laugh long and hard. You'll feel better after you do, for, eventually, you come to realize that laughing does not mean you're "all over" your child's death. It just means you needed some relief from all that pain that comes with grieving. Those of us who allow humor to become a part of our lives again survive better. If someone nearby hears you laughing and attributes it to problems with your mental health, just tell them that that's mental health, all right, but it's no problem!

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This is a new article by Mary written since her "retirement" from the National Board of BP/USA. Those who have enjoyed her writings over the years will be glad to know that she is working on a book of her past and present articles.

The next article is by another former BP/USA Board member and President who has a book of her many good writings over the years. This book is *THE SLENDER THREAD* and is available from Shirley at 415 Mimosa Dr. , Denton TX 76201-0804 and in the bookstore at the Gathering in June.



### AT LAST, THE SPRING

Shirley Cognard Ottman  
BP/USA of North Texas  
*THE SLENDER THREAD*

How is it in the winter of my grief that I can notice how the seasons change with their accustomed regularity?

Just now I cannot bear the taste of Spring,

yet She won't sleep forever. This month She's busy pushing trees to bud, and bidding flowers to raise their dormant seeds to life. All life is reaching for the light. And all my own potentiality in spite of heavy winter's cloak, races to embrace the good, strong harbingers of joy and peace and transformation.

### THE CHILDREN OF APRIL NINETEENTH

Sascha from WINTERSUN

Let these children forever remind us that our souls may be in greater peril than theirs. Let these children forever remind us that we are the ones to need their blessings now. Let these children remind us to pray that time has not run out for us.

Sascha wrote this in memory of the children who died in Oklahoma City. After Sept. 11, it is worth re-reading, remembering those who died on that day also.

**BEREAVED PARENTS OF  
THE USA**

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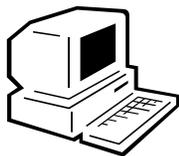
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**NEWSLETTERS**

The national BP/USA Newsletter is now available electronically. It is in Adobe Acrobat at our web site. If you do not have this program, you may download it at no cost also. To receive the newsletter by e-mail, rather than U.S. mail, send your name and e-mail address to us at [president@bereavedparentsusa.org](mailto:president@bereavedparentsusa.org). You will receive notification by e-mail when the newsletter is on line each quarter. You will help us by saving printing, paper and postage costs. We appreciate anyone who can help us in this way.



**FROM THE  
EDITOR**

Betty R. Ewart

By now all the Chapters have received Chapter Chat with much important and useful information. You should have received a brochure about the 2002 Gathering also. Pages 9 and 10 of this newsletter contain a summary of the Gathering with a registration form. Bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings are welcome and should find this Gathering very helpful. For further information about the Gathering, you will find the address and phone numbers as well as an e-mail address on those pages too.

There will be a meeting of the Board of Directors of the BP/USA on the Thurs. before the Gathering. There will also be a forum on Thurs. evening which is for all who have arrived and wish to attend. At that time the Board will report on the year past and answer questions. This is also your chance to offer suggestions for your organization to its Board of Directors. The Annual Meeting of the BP/USA will be on Friday afternoon of the Gathering. We hope that we will see many of you in New Orleans!

We are also interested in serving persons who are interested in BP/USA and do not belong to a chapter and those who might like to start a BP/USA chapter for their community. Information on both of these programs and the person to contact will be found on page 11 of this newsletter.

We are pleased to announce that the 2001 Gathering has turned in their final report and there was a surplus. That is shared 50/50 between the National BP and the sponsoring chapter. This enables National to underwrite expenses for the Gatherings and keep costs to a minimum. Pat Kinney who ran the boutique and Linda Horn and the Hinsdale BP/USA who ran the bookstore, also donated their 1/2 of those profits to the National BP.

Thanks to everyone who worked so hard to make the Gathering a success.

Chapters and Members at Large will be receiving ballots soon to vote for members of the Board of Directors. Be sure to return those before the deadline to Paul Kinney who is the person taking the proxies this year. Results will be reported at the Annual Meeting.

Have you noticed a new section on the web site called "Library"? This will contain special brochures, articles, etc. that may be of help to bereaved persons. This material is also on Adobe Acrobat.

You might be interested to know that our website is visited by many people. Our Webmaster reports, for example, that on the last 3 days of Feb., there were 964 visits. On the first 3 days of March, there were 926 – this means almost 2,000 persons read some of our material in a 6 day span. We receive e-mails almost everyday from persons looking for information or help with the grieving process – often seeking our Newsletter which now has a mailing of over 700 not including those who may download it from the net. There will be more information coming on the web site and ways that persons and chapters may use it as we develop new exciting programs with our web master. To think that, when I retired, I couldn't even use a computer – it shows anyone can become a part of the new technology age!

This all says that there are many persons out there who are looking for information and help as they go through their grief journey. If you have any suggestions for our website, let us know. Spread the word in your chapters and areas that this tool is available for anyone with a computer or with access to one at a library, etc. This is what BP/USA is all about – helping those who need us.

We honor the memory of our children by serving others in their name.

## **SPRING; HOPE OR MORE PAIN**

Margaret Gerner  
BP/USA – St. Louis, MO

Here it comes! Spring! Flowers blooming, weather warming, the cold of winter is behind us. We're coming up out of our pain. Right? Wrong!

My six-year-old son, Arthur, was killed by an automobile on Friday, May 28, 1971. The Easter before was the last time we were together as a complete family. For years after, spring, and especially the Easter season, began, again, the realization that we were no longer a complete family, and never would be again. Each year brought a new year of pain.

When the first spring came after Arthur was killed, I thought I would be better. Buds popped out, and my sadness was deeper. Easter came, and my pain was no less. The temperature rose, but the coldness in my heart never left.

Many more springs came – and none of them brought the relief I prayed for. For me, the hope and renewal that was supposed to be a part of spring was a lie.

Ironically though, the beginning of the resolution of my grief began in the spring of 1978. My grief, which by this time had become prolonged and distorted, created a number of other problems in my life. Among them was the deterioration of my marriage.

We began seeing a marriage counselor. I couldn't believe it when he told me that it was not only acceptable, but necessary, to face Arthur's death and talk about the pain and emotions I had been encouraged to suppress all these years.

Mine is a long story of struggle and determination, of steps and missteps

and pain and sadness and loss. But it's also a long story of change and growth. The beginning of the resolution of my grief may have started then, but it didn't all happen in spring. It took place over many seasons.

Various seasons are significant for all of us. The Christmas holidays may be significant for you. The middle of June may be significant for someone else. A colorful fall may be significant for another. But, for some reason, we are led to believe that spring will bring a lessening of our pain. This is not true. Spring is simply a time of year. It's a date. It's a season. It's symbolic. But, spring is not magic.

Yes, it holds promises, but those promises are only brought to fruition when we work at them. Spring can be the impetus for change. The changes that take place in nature can cause us to do what we need to do to resolve our grief. The beauty of spring can be the factor that encourages us to find beauty in our lives again. Yes, we see growth and change and renewal all around us in spring. But it won't happen for us unless we make it happen.

In early grief, we hardly see spring come. We are so immersed in our pain and desolation that it is hard to see anything. Just as winter comes before spring, dark, painful grief work comes before we begin to see the light of comfortable life again. Don't expect to sidestep the healthy, albeit painful, normal, and long process of grief. Don't endow a season with magic to make changes in you.

Hard, painful grief work is what will get you to the other side of your child's death, not a date on the calendar.



## **A PRAYER FOR SPRING**

Janis Heil  
BP/USA Ocala, FL

Like Springtime, let me unfold and grow fresh and anew from this cocoon of grief that has been spun around me. Help me face the harsh reality of sunshine and renewed life, as my bones still creak from the winter of my grief. Life has dared to go on around me. And, as I recover from the insult of life's continuance, I readjust my focus to include recovery and growth as a possibility of my future. Give me strength to break out of the cocoon of my grief. But may I never forget it as the place where I grew my wings because of my loss.

## **NOW I UNDERSTAND**

Gail Bratlie  
Coeur d'Alene, ID

Memorial Day never had any special meaning to me until our son, Steve, died. In fact, I remember thinking, "What a waste of money and how morbid to put flowers on a grave after someone had been dead for months or years."

Our son's ashes are buried in the mountains of North Idaho where he loved to camp, hunt and fish – it's a five hour round trip by car from our home. So we can't visit there often. Now, I wish his grave was closer.

So, on the Memorial Days since he died. I've found comfort in visiting or taking flowers to a living family member or friend. Or simply placing a flower on a grave in a nearby cemetery.

Now I understand why Memorial Day is a special day.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

May 18, 2002 from 7:45 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.: The Anne Arundel County Chapter of BP/USA will host a Conference of Hope and Healing at the Calvary United Methodist Church in Annapolis, Maryland. Registration is \$25 which includes lunch and a continental breakfast. For information contact Pat Schultz at 410-255-7760 or by e-mail at jim.n.pat@juno.com.

June 28, 29 and 30, 2002: The BP/USA National Gathering will be held in New Orleans. For information see pages 9 and 10 or contact BP2002Gathering@aol.com

July 5-7, 2002: National TCF Conference in Salt Lake City, UT. For information write TCF Conference, PO Box 1149, Bountiful, UT 84011.

September 12-15, 2002: Third International TCF Conference in Sydney Australia. Information as it arrives.

The St. Louis Chapter of the Bereaved Parents of the USA is pleased to announce that the 2003 BP/USA Gathering will be in St. Louis. As their information becomes available, it will be announced.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**LIVING A LIFE THAT MATTERS** is a new book by Harold S. Kushner. Those who know Rabbi Kushner's books know that he has much to offer to grieving persons. **WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE** is one of the first books many of us read. This new one deals with "Resolving the Conflict Between Conscience and Success." He deals, in this book, with the truly important things in life. His chapter called "Best Actor in a Supporting Role" deals with our work as support to those who need us. He has a very good section dealing with **IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE** in which he

speaks about how the character in this movie learns how much a difference his life made although he didn't realize it. It is an inspiration to live a life that will make a difference too. The book is available in most bookstores and is published by Alfred A. Knopf, and distributed by Random House, Inc., NY.

**THE CHRISTMAS BOX MIRACLE** is this year's contribution by Richard Paul Evans. It deals with how he came to write the original **CHRISTMAS BOX**, the story of his own spiritual journey and stories of people he met along the way. The book is published by Simon Schuster, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, NY, NY and is available in most bookstores

**JOURNEY THROUGH HEARTSONGS** is a book by Mattie J. T. Stepanek. Most people have heard about this young man and his writing. The book is published by Hyperion, 77 W. 66th St., NY, NY 10023. This is award-winning poetry by a very young child who suffers from muscular dystrophy but has never let it get him down. He writes about life and death, love, innocence and joy. Jimmy Carter, in an introduction says, "Journey Through HeartSongs will inspire readers of all ages with thoughts and images that bring both tears and expanded hearts."

Those of you who are fans of the Chicken Soup books, published by Health Communications, Inc. of Deerfield Beach, FL, will find two new ones with inspirational stories. They are **CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SURVIVING SOUL** and **CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SOUL OF AMERICA**, dealing with the events of Sept. 11. These are, of course, in all books stores also.

**HANNAH'S GIFT; LESSONS FROM A LIFE FULLY LIVED** is by Maria Housden and published by Bantam Dell Publishing Group, 1540 Broadway, NY, NY. This book tells of a child of three and the story will

take hold of your heart and bring tears to your eyes. The author shares her daughter's three years of life and struggle with cancer and the lessons she, as a mother, learned about courage and joy from her daughter. Hannah's red Mary Janes are an important part of the story and one of those touching memories we have of our children.

**AMERICA OUT OF THE ASHES** a collection of true stories of courage and heroism. Published by Honor Books, PO Box 55388, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74155 it is in most bookstores. You have read many stories of Sept. 11 and some of them are probably in this book. But there are many others along with poems, words to songs, etc. which you will find to be inspirational and moving. It raises the question, "Where was God?" and answers it very well by accounts of the actions of people during those hours and days.



### PLEASE ASK

Barbara Taylor Hudson  
POMC, Cincinnati, OH

Someone asked me about you today, It's been so long since anyone has done that; it felt so good to talk about you – to share my memories of you and to simply say your name out loud. She asked me if I minded talking about what happened to you – or would it be too painful to speak of it. I told her, "I think of it every day and speaking about it helps me to release the tormented thoughts whirling around in my head." She said she never realized the pain would last this long – she apologized for not asking sooner. I told her, "Thanks for asking." I don't know if it was curiosity or concern that made her ask. But I told her, "Please, do it again sometime soon."

## SEEDS TO GROW

Bridie Tracy  
Bereavement Magazine  
Colorado Springs, CO 80918  
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Spring is when we think of things growing. We see a rebirth of the barren trees and we watch the grass getting greener. Some of the perennial flowers start to bloom. It makes me wonder just what happens to life. This is also when many of us think of planting some form of garden.

May is the birth month of my first son. He loved flowers, but not gardening. It was a chore to get him to help with yard work but he would often ask me the names of different flowers. Roses were his favorite. Somehow all this led me to thinking about our grief when a child dies.

After my children died, I was aware that seeds had been planted and were growing within me. The first seed was anger. I was angry at my youngest son for being careless with his precious life and angry at God for not taking better care of him. I was bitter because I would not experience events in my life that others would have: graduations, weddings, Sunday dinners and Little League games for my grandchildren. Nor would I have anyone to whom I could pass down family heirlooms and traditions.

But there were other kinds of seeds growing too. There were caring and kind friends who tried to help or say the right thing. Many were mere acquaintances who went out of their way to show caring and concern. Gradually I became aware of compassion growing in me. It is the kind of compassion that comes from knowing the pain and sorrow that someone else is experiencing.

There are no words that can express this kind of compassion. I look at obituary columns and, when

the one listed is young, immediately my thoughts are of the parents. I know their soul racking pain and I spend a moment in prayer for them, hoping to help them through an awful time. Thus compassion takes the form of not expecting others whose children have died to be able to function well for a very long time. This compassion has grown out of my own pain and out of the love I have for children.

Sometimes, I'm aware of the struggle these seedlings have within me. Which of them will become strong and survive? I try to fertilize the gentle, caring and compassionate seedlings, but, sometimes, like weeds in a garden, the bitterness and anger creep in and all but choke the other seedlings. It seems I have to be vigilant in nurturing the seedlings I want to represent the effect my children's lives have had on me.

In their memory, I will continue to weed out the anger, bitterness, impatience and intolerance. I will do this to show them my undying love.

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## WHERE ARE ALL THE BUTTERFLIES?

Shirley C. Ottman  
BP/USA of North Texas

Grief's landscape is a barren place, as lonely as a salt flat, starkly bleak and treeless beneath the cloudless panoply of heaven.

Where might we then find hope if not one solitary bloom's in sight?  
And where may we find faith if no auspicious rainbows span the sky?  
And where may we find joy in such a sterile place?  
And where may we find peace when tears provide the sole precipitation there?  
And where are all the butterflies which from their silken tombs emerge in beauty?  
Where is my butterfly?  
Where are all the butterflies?

(This is from a book by the same name published by the chapter which will be available at the Gathering bookstore.)  
Gathering)

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED An article from USA TODAY Feb. 18, 2002

Scientists are asking for the public's help in monitoring the monarch butterflies' northward trek this spring. A catastrophic storm in Mexico last month killed an estimated 270 million of the orange and black butterflies – nearly 80% of the entire population of monarchs – and biologists want to learn how long it will take them to rebound. "Volunteers can help scientists assess the effect of this storm, as well as other natural and human-induced threats on monarch butterfly populations," says Elizabeth Howard, founder and program director of the Journey North Monarch Migration Project at [www.learner.org/jnorth](http://www.learner.org/jnorth). Besides reporting sightings, volunteers can help monitor monarch reproduction this summer through the Monarch Larva Monitoring Project at [www.mlmp.org](http://www.mlmp.org)

Maybe BP/USA members can help with this project.



Butterfly, butterfly  
Set my child's soul free.  
Float, flutter and fly,  
Cast down some hope to me.  
Butterfly, butterfly  
Don't fly far, come back to me.  
Float around me always,  
I need you, can't you see?  
Butterfly, butterfly  
Soon we'll be together again.  
We'll float, flutter and fly  
Together, forever in the wind.

Barbara Embry  
BP/USA Louisville, KY

## WHAT DOES MAY BRING?

Tracy Rhein  
BP/USA Central Arkansas

First, May brings MOTHER'S DAY -another painful holiday. Commercials are everywhere; I can't check e-mail without being bombarded with ads for gifts and cards for Mother's Day. Some churches honor the oldest mother, the youngest mother and the mother with the most children present. Then there are the flowers – wear a red flower if your mother is living and a white one if your mother has died. (I keep hearing carnations, but it was always roses when I was a child.) Some years ago, some bereaved mothers started wearing a yellow flower, either alone or with the traditional color, honoring their own mother.

It helped me to know the origin of Mother's Day. After Anna Jarvis's mother died May 9, 1905, Anna decided a Sunday in May should be set aside to honor her mother and all mothers. Anna felt her mother deserved recognition because, although her life was filled with sorrow, she lived selflessly and showed kindness and generosity toward others. Anna was one of four surviving siblings; seven others died in early childhood and Anna's mother mourned those seven children throughout her life. Anna never married and never had a child of her own. Her work to establish a day to honor her mother persuaded President Woodrow Wilson to proclaim the second Sunday in May as a national holiday honoring all mothers.

Finally newly bereaved mothers commonly have some questions that are acute on this day. For those who have no surviving children, so far as I am concerned, you are a mother. For the rest of you, each one has to decide how to answer the question of "how many children do you have?"

I am still the mother of three children although one is no longer on earth with me.

I hope each of you find some peace on this Mother's Day and that knowing it specifically honored a bereaved mother will make each succeeding one a little easier.

MEMORIAL DAY was established to honor those who died in the military defending our nation, but has become a time of general remembrance. I pass one small cemetery in southwest Arkansas fairly frequently and always see that fresh white stones have been spread before Memorial Day and every grave appears to have a new flower arrangement. As a child, my parents would take me with them but I had never known any of the relatives whose graves we visited. Perhaps, as we get older, we think that someday we will do this for our parents or grandparents but never our children. My son was cremated and I don't have a grave to visit but this holiday has far more impact on me now.

May also brings GRADUATIONS. Whether from kindergarten, grade school, high school or college, this is a rite of passage that some of our children never reached. If your child was close to graduation, the school may recognize him or her in some way. Or another child (sibling, cousin, friend) may be graduating and receiving their announcement may bring a special ache.

We hope you all plan ahead and discuss with family members and caring friends so that you can get through these events with a minimum of pain.



## MEMORIAL DAY

SASCHA  
WINTERSUN

For each grave  
where a soldier lies  
at his rest

For each prayer  
that is said today  
out of love

For each sigh  
of remembering  
someone who died

Let us also give thought to  
the mothers and fathers  
the brothers and sisters  
the friends and the lovers  
whom death left behind.

### THE FACE OF GRIEF

Betty Ewart, Editor

Do you know what the face of grief looks like? We all do by looking in the mirror.

But look in the faces of the families of the victims of Sept. 11!

Look in the face of the mother who has now, in one year, had her husband and 5 grandchildren die and her daughter sent to prison for life!

Look in the face of the haunting picture of the Afganistan teen in the National Geographic and now, at age 30 and after having her parents killed and having a child die, the same woman.

For the world to see, this is the face of Grief!

## Erma Bombeck: excerpted from a column

Motherhood isn't just a series of contractions; it's a state of mind. From the moment we know life is inside us, we feel a responsibility to protect and defend that human being. It is a promise we can't keep. We beat ourselves to death over that pledge. "If only I had taken him to the doctor when he had a fever." "If I hadn't let him use the car that night." The longer I live the more convinced I become that surviving changes us. After the bitterness, the anger, the guilt and the despair are tempered by time, we look at life differently.

While I was writing my book, I Want To Grow Hair, I Want To Grow Up, I Want to Go to Boise, I talked with mothers who had lost a child to cancer. Every single one said that death gave their lives new meaning and purpose. And who do you think prepared them for the rough, lonely road they had to travel? Their dying child. They pointed their mothers toward the future and told them to keep going. The children had already accepted what their mothers were fighting to reject.

The children in the bombed-out nursery in Oklahoma City have touched more lives than they will ever know. Workers who had probably given their kids a mechanical pat on the head without thinking that morning were making calls home during the day to their children to say, "I Love You."

This may sound like a strange Mother's Day column on a day when joy and life abound for millions of mothers throughout the country. But it is also a day of appreciation and respect. I can think of no mother who deserves it more than those who had to give a child back.

In the face of adversity we are not

permitted to ask, "Why me?" You can ask, but you won't get an answer. Maybe you are the instrument who is left behind to perpetuate the life that was lost and appreciate the time you had with it. The late Gilda Radner summed it up pretty well. "I want a perfect ending. Now I've leaned the hard way that some poems don't rhyme and some stories don't have a clear beginning, middle and end. Life is about not knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the best of it, without knowing what is going to happen next. Delicious ambiguity."

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## SOMETIMES A MAN NEEDS TO CRY

Lewis Grizzard, Columnist  
Atlanta Constitution

The man's friend, Jennifer wrote me a letter ad told me about his problem. These sort of things make you sick, but they happen and then what is left to do is somehow find a way to cope.

The man had two daughters. They were bright and they were beautiful. One was 16. The other was 18. Last year the girls were in an auto accident. They were hit by a drunk driver. The 16 year old lingered for a week. Then the doctors determined she was brain dead and she was disconnected from the life support system. In a week the man had buried both his daughters.

"All his life," Jennifer wrote, "he had been the pillar of strength for his family, his church and his many friends." He had never weakened in his support for them when they needed him. I guess that's why he didn't show us the grief he knew that was inside him. "I never even saw him cry. I guess he was just trying to hold on so we wouldn't see that big, crumbling heart he was hiding." You can't hide a heart like that for very long. In the year since his daughter's deaths, the man has had two heart

attacks. Jennifer is convinced it is his grief that is causing his health to decline steadily.

In the letter, Jennifer also asked me to do something I don't normally like to do, and that is to use this column to give somebody a message. Some people write and want me to wish their mothers Happy Birthday in this space. Others want me to write something as a practical joke on some of their friends. I would have to go out and find a real job if I resorted to things like that. But I'm going to break my rule just this once. The letter almost pleaded with me.

"He reads your column," Jennifer wrote. "I know you're not Dear Abby but maybe there is something you can say to our friend. It's time for him to realize that grown men do cry, that it's OK to let grief and sorrow flow out like a river among family and friends. The doctors don't know what to do about him, but I think there are just some remedies that don't come from a bottle or an operating room."

Jennifer is right. I'm no Dear Abbey nor a counselor, nor a minister, nor a psychiatrist. But, if the man is reading this column – and he certainly would know he is the subject of it by this time – maybe I can make a few points.

It is obvious your friends love you, sir, and they care about you. By not sharing your grief with them, by not leaning on them in time of your greatest need, you are hurting them. And it hurts them to see you unwilling to share your burden with them. It hurts them that you are depriving them the ability to help you.

The heart is an amazing mechanism. Give it half a chance and it will mend itself and the best place to start is to put your arms around somebody who loves you and cry. Contrary to what a number of us dumb clucks think, tears often are a grown man's best friend.

## Mrs. Butterworth

Marcia Carter, Waleska GA  
Author of "Stephen's Moon"

"Every supermarket decision has a family memory connected to it. You'd never expect a package of spaghetti or a can of creamed corn to leave you crying in the aisle at the store." - Excerpt from Charlie Walton's book, "When There Are No Words."

Every parent who has lost a child knows these words to be true. Whether it is baby food or a toddler's newly discovered favorite food, junk food for teenagers or an adult child's old time favorite, the grocery store can be a tough trip.

I lost my son, Stephen, when he was 18, so it was the junk food – potato chips, Funyuns, French bread for pizzas, Ragu sauce, pepperoni, Cheetos, cheesebread, cereal of all kinds, Chex mix and so on that haunted me and made me not want to grocery shop. But – it was the golden face of Mrs. Butterworth that brought me to my knees.

As I stared in horror at her face, I remembered sticky little handprints on the wall when the highchair had been just a little too close. I remembered a chubby little toddler sitting next to me at the table, talking seriously, his green eyes wide. "I sink I saw her wink at me," he said of Mrs. Butterworth, sounding a little like Tweety Bird.

"Really?" I asked. Mrs. Butterworth always winked on the commercial – she seemed quite lifelike.

I took Mrs. Butterworth and made her walk toward his plate. She tripped when she was just the right distance from his plate and syrup spilled from her head right onto his pancakes. He looked at me and I saw it coming in his eyes – laughter. It seems to start deep within and rolls from their chest until they lose their

breath. He cackled, he gasped, his body shook with laughter as Mrs. Butterworth regained her footing and said, "Oh, my – silly me!" He laughed even more.

Therefore, Mrs. Butterworth made a ritual of tripping and spilling syrup onto his pancakes. Sometimes she would let out a shriek as she fell; other times she would say in an embarrassed, dainty voice, something about how clumsy she was or how she had tripped over her apron. Whatever she did, he rolled.

When Stephen was 15, the two of us often shared a quick breakfast before rushing out the door. He usually ate pancakes that he cooked for himself and I joined him for a granola bar and a diet Coke. I was lost in thought one morning, a particularly stressful day ahead of me, when out of the corner of my eyes, I saw Mrs. Butterworth come walking toward me. She was helped by a hand as big as mine with slender fingers wrapped around her base.

"So – how you been?" Mrs. Butterworth asked in a voice that tried to sound feminine but came out a little like a drag queen. She tripped suddenly and screamed in apparent horror. "Oh, crap!" she said as she stood back up. It may be the only time that Mrs. Butterworth has ever said "crap" – I'm not sure. I laughed until I was sick and left for work with a smile in my heart.

But now, I did not laugh or even smile when I saw her face. I cried. Other shoppers probably thought I was insane. I walked away. I couldn't look at her. Cheetos and Funyuns and potato chips had already stabbed at me over on aisle four; Captain Crunch had almost tripped me; the Tombstone Pizzas had made me as cold as they were in the freezer just to look at them, but the little golden-faced lady broke my heart.

For the next four years, I had a

peculiar interest in shortening and oil – you see, they were across the aisle from Mrs. Butterworth and I had to keep my back to her. She was an old friend, but I couldn't face her. She was an intentional emotional grenade. It was a sad situation and such a shame for two who had been so close not to acknowledge each other's presence, but I just couldn't look at her.

I always knew she was there, kindly, smiling and understanding that I couldn't face her. But just last week, I felt the golden stare strongly on my back as I once again feigned interest in the Wesson and the Crisco. For the first time in four years, I dared turn and peek at her. She boasted of half the calories – so, she too understood being mid-forties, huh?

I dared turn a little more to fully face the little lady who had meant so much to Stephen and me – the fully golden one, with all the calories. The tears came, but a smile came with them. The memories that the golden face evoked were gentle, worth remembering forever. Older grief is, indeed, kinder.

I put her in my shopping cart and took her home with me. She stands on one of the top shelves in my kitchen pantry, guarding my granola bars and my memories – handprints on a wall, a toddler's laughter, a teenager making his stressed mom laugh.

And, Stephen – you know, buddy, this morning when I grabbed a granola bar, I sink I saw her wink at me.



**BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA  
2002 NATIONAL GATHERING**



**June 28, 29 & 30, 2002**

**Hosted by the St. Bernard Chapter of BP/USA  
New Orleans, Louisiana**

**TOGETHER WE REMEMBER  
TOGETHER WE GRIEVE  
TOGETHER WE GROW**

The St. Bernard Chapter of BP/USA has planned a Gathering with speakers, workshops and sharing groups which will revolve around the theme, Together We Remember, Together We Grieve, Together We Grow. They invite you to join with other bereaved parents, grandparents, siblings and family members for what they hope will be a healing and inspiring time for everyone.

The Gathering will be at the New Orleans Airport Holiday Inn Select, 2929 Williams Boulevard, Kenner, LA 70062. Reservations for rooms must be made with the hotel by calling 800-887-7371. Be sure to tell them that you will be attending the BP/USA Gathering in order to get the special rate. That rate is \$58.11 with tax, per night, with up to four persons in the room. The rate is also available for 3 days before and 3 days following the event for anyone wishing to combine the Gathering with a trip to New Orleans. Registration should be received by no later than May 27, 2002. Shuttle service from the airport to the motel is available at no cost as is parking at the hotel. There is also shuttle service to some of the nearby attractions.

Registration is \$15 per person with a maximum of \$45 per family. Meals will be \$40 per day including tax and gratuity. Individual meals are available at \$10 for breakfast, \$12 for lunch and \$18 for dinner. There will be 3 meals available on both Friday and Saturday and breakfast only on Sunday.

There will be a boutique with butterflies and angel pieces available for purchase and a bookstore with a variety of reading materials. There will be Christmas Ornaments for sale with the BP logo. There will be picture boards where we may share our children's pictures and information. Photo buttons will also be available for purchase. Bring a picture approximately 2 3/4 inches in diameter – a snapshot or wallet picture will do.

There will be a hospitality room where you may visit with others, sharing sessions in the evenings and workshops on various subjects of interest to bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. If you would like a list of these and other information, contact the Gathering Committee at the address, phone or e-mail on the next page with the registration form. You will also find a complete list of the workshops and further information about the Gathering on the web site at [www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org)

There will be a very special photo presentation also during the Gathering. If you have been there before and have a picture of your child on the presentation, you need only let us know that you want it included again this year by notifying Dave Simone at the address below. If you have not done this before and wish to be a part of this, send a photograph of your child (no larger than 8/12 by 11) with the name, date of birth, date of death, your address and phone number to Dave Simone, 1230 Carrie Wood Drive, Valrico, FL 33594 before June 14. The pictures will be returned at the Gathering but we suggest that you send a reprint of the photograph to be sure that you do not lose a precious picture.

We also will have decorations made from butterflies cut out and decorated as in past years. If you wish to participate in this, the pattern for the butterfly is available on the Web Site with the materials about the Gathering –[www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org) or from the Gathering Committee – e-mail, phone number, and address on next page on the Registration Form.

We hope that you will be with us in New Orleans. It will be a sharing time which will help everyone in some way as together we remember, grieve and grow!

**BP/USA 2002 NATIONAL GATHERING**

**REGISTRATION FORM**

**REGISTRATION FEE:**

Number of people \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$15 each (Maximum fee of \$45) Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Names: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Heaven's Day: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Heaven's Day: \_\_\_\_\_

Chapter Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

**MEALS:**

Please fill in the number of people for each meal:

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Daily
Cost per person:	\$10.00	\$12.00	\$18.00	Cost
Friday:	_____	_____	_____	_____
Saturday:	_____	_____	_____	_____
Sunday:	_____	_____	_____	_____

Meals Total: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Owed: \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE MAKE YOUR CHECK OR MONEY ORDER PAYABLE TO :  
BP/USA 2002 GATHERING AND SEND IT WITH THIS FORM.**

**IMPORTANT :** Hotel reservations must be made with the hotel by calling 1-800-887-7371. Ask for the BP/USA Gathering Rate: \$58.11 including taxes.

If you have questions about this form, about the workshops, or anything else regarding the Gathering or for a complete brochure about the Gathering, contact Laurie Myers at the address below, by phone at 504-271-9532 or by e-mail at BP2002Gathering@aol.com.

More copies of this are available at [www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org). You may copy this page if you wish.

**MAIL TO: BP/USA 2002 GATHERING  
504 Perrin Drive  
Arabi, LA 70032**

## **BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

<b>Marion County BP/USA Chapter, FL Mitch &amp; Renee Dudnikov</b>	<b>Printing of Chapter Chat in memory of their children In support for the 2002 National Gathering in memory of son, Marc</b>
<b>Owen Cheatham Foundation Linda &amp; Russell Horn Bob &amp; Mona Whitley Pat Kinney</b>	<b>In support of programs of the National BP/USA In loving memory of son, David In loving memory of son, Peter Whitley Share of Surplus of money raised in the 2001 Gathering Boutique in loving memory of Paul &amp; Pat's son , Jeff</b>
<b>BP/USA Chapter Hinsdale IL Chapter</b>	<b>Contributions to Bookstore at the 2001 Gathering and share of surplus money raised in it in loving memory of their children</b>
<b>BP/USA Ann Arundel County Chapter Mitch and Renee Dudnikov</b>	<b>In loving memory of the children of their chapter members In loving memory of mother, R. Zimmerman</b>

**If your donation does not appear on this list, it was received after this Newsletter went to press and will appear in the next Newsletter.**

**Since BP/USA is a qualified charitable 501(c) (3) organization your donation may be tax deductible. We never charge for our newsletter or many of our other services. We also attempt to keep the cost of the Gathering low so that more people may attend. Donations may be designated as follows: in memory of a loved one, in appreciation for someone or something in our life, the Disaster Fund, the Gathering costs, brochure printing or the newsletter printing and postage. If not designated, the money will be used for general operating funds. Please carefully designate how you wish your donation to be used and how you would like it listed on this page. We thank our chapters and individual members – both chapter members and members at large – for their generous support of BP/USA and its work.**

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**If you do not belong to a Chapter of BP/USA but would like to be a Member at Large, contact Theresa Valentine at 5107 N. 142nd St., Omaha, NE 68164, by phone at 402-431-9090 or by e-mail at [tavlsv@radiks.net](mailto:tavlsv@radiks.net). She will send you an application or you may find one on the BP/USA Website at [www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org). Being a Member at Large means that you will receive the newsletter regularly and you may vote for a delegate to represent you on the national Board of Directors of the BP/USA. There is no cost to belong and we would welcome the opportunity to serve you.**

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**If you would be interested in helping to start a chapter of BP/USA in your area, we would be very pleased to help you do so. You will need four people who are at least 18 months from the death of their child. This can include couples. You will also need a place to meet. We can help you with ideas of how to finance your chapter and how to advertise it. We will also supply you with brochures and other materials to help you get started. For information and help in getting started, contact Pat Moser at 3921 S W 5th Ave., Ocala, FL 34474, by phone at 352-854-1275 or by e-mail at [moserpat@aol.com](mailto:moserpat@aol.com). You will also find material about starting a Chapter on our web site – [www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org)**

**PLEASE NOTE: The next Newsletter will be a little late, coming after July 1, in order that we may include materials about the Gathering and pictures.**