



A JOURNEY TOGETHER

NEWSLETTER OF THE BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

VOLUME VIII NO. 2, Spring 2003
(April, May and June)

PREPARING FOR SPRING AND WHATEVER ELSE IS COMING

Betty R. Ewart, Editor

This past winter was a truly memorable one. The storms – ice, snow, rain – and the floods that came later have been record making. The loss of the 7 lives on the Columbia Shuttle touched us all and brought back memories of past astronaut tragedies and other tragedies not the least of which is our own personal tragedy of the loss of a child or children. We have seen one child safely returned to her parents but many others not returned or found dead. The thoughts, as I write this, of an impending war have us all concerned as we think of the men, women and children of all countries who may die and of the families who will then face the grief that we have all knows.

We try to turn our minds to looking forward to Spring at this time of the year and memories of flowers, warm days, and times with our families and loved ones! The article that follows by Mary Cleckley is a past one but so very appropriate for this Spring.

We also prepare for the days of May and June that can often be hard – Memorial Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Graduation, etc. Articles in the Newsletter will help with those days, we hope.

What can we and BP/USA offer to the parents, grandparents and siblings of those who may give their lives in an upcoming war? We can offer our sympathy, of course. We

can offer hope to these people and be a role model – we are people who have been in the same depths and survived. We know something of what the future may hold. We also know and can share that our loved ones will always be with us and are never forgotten.

Reach out to others as these days come and go. Perhaps it is no small matter that Easter is also a part of this period. For many of us this reminds us of he greatest hope of all. Share your understanding and hope.



SPRING MAGIC FOR YOU

Mary Cleckley, Georgia
BP/USA Member at Large

As I sit and admire the beautiful and lush growth of the trees this spring, I feel renewed. The long and arduous winter we had all over the country had made me wonder if, indeed, the trees would be able to perform their magic this year. A late spring freeze, after many trees had budded out, had hurt. Some trees were also showing the results of a storms. In the woods back of my home, the tops of several oaks were broken by the intense winds. The damage is obvious. The still hanging dead limbs and leaves stand out by comparison to the chartreuse color of the new leaves.

We have learned from past experiences that the pines, so plentiful in the South, are particularly vulnerable to the forces of nature. We are accustomed to the wind and ice storms taking the tops out of many of them. However it was a

surprise when the storm didn't affect the pines but, instead, it took the tops out of many oaks. The oaks are sturdy and, as a rule, can stand much of what nature has to offer. They are dependable and deep rooted.

Does what happened to the trees not remind you of what happens to a bereaved family after the death of a child? It takes even the "oaks" among us and tears the heart out of us, leaving us damaged. For a long time, the damage done is obvious: our limbs are not necessarily broken, but our hearts surely are. The most dependable and sturdy among us are brought to our knees and it is hard to imagine that new growth will ever take place again.

As I look at the oaks back in my woods, I know that one day those dangling dead limbs and leaves will no longer be obvious. They will eventually fall to the ground and nature will set out to repair as much as she is able. As with broken tree limbs and broken hearts, nature will not be able to repair everything perfectly. Scars will remain and the shape of the trees and our lives will never be the same. Our recoveries will differ, however, for the trees will continue doing what only they know how to do: grow acorns and replace limbs. We, on the other hand, not only have the opportunity to grow, but also to change in many ways. One does not suffer through such pain without learning valuable lessons about what is important and about priorities. As the spring revived the trees, let some of the magic spill over on you. Learn to grow in important ways. The pines among us will not learn, the oaks surely will. When you say your prayers, pray to be an oak.

**BEREAVED PARENTS OF
THE USA**

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**NOMINEES FOR
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Please note that this is a corrected listing of candidates for the Board of Directors in 2003 .

For Chapter Representative:
Pat Moser of FL, Martha Smith of IL, Virginia Gallian of TX , Susan Means of KY, Kevin Hunsaker of AR and Ann Wooton of SC. Two to be elected each for a 3 year term.

For Member-at-Large: Therese Valentine of NE and Barbara Cooke of AL. One to be elected for a one year term.



**FROM THE
EDITOR**

The Board of Directors of BP/USA is very pleased and proud to announce that we have added a new appointed member – a Sibling Representative. We are equally pleased that our first appointment has been accepted and she is Sarah Ryan from the St. Louis Chapter. Sarah has been one of the persons in that Chapter who has helped develop a program for siblings in the chapter and in planning sibling workshops for the Gathering. She will be hoping to interest other siblings in becoming active and interest Chapters in involving siblings on the local level. Her first Board meeting will be at the Gathering. Greet her and talk to her about our future involvement of siblings in BP/USA.

We are pleased to announce another new addition for BP. Katy Dawson, a friend of Shirley Ottman and a retired Spanish teacher from the University of Texas, offered to translate the brochures into Spanish. She has sent these to us and it is a great addition to our materials. We will be putting these on the web and sending copies to each Chapter. We will have extras to send to anyone who requests them. If there is a large response, we will print copies. A few of our Chapters have Spanish speaking members or communities and this will help us greatly with outreach. The number of Spanish speaking persons has grown and this is a group we want to reach out to help.

We are working on getting all of our brochures on the web in both English and Spanish. Consider giving copies to hospitals, churches, funeral homes and other groups as outreach for your chapter or BP/USA in general where there are no chapters. If you wish copies, contact Pat Moser at PatLMoser@aol.com or at 3921 SW 5th Ave., Ocala FL 34474-6716. There is no cost for individual copies and, in quantity they cost \$10 for 50.

**DON'T FORGET
THE GATHERING**

The Gathering is coming soon and you don't want to miss it. The St. Louis Chapter has planned a very good selection of workshops, good speakers, and a good hotel with great meals. For complete information, contact your Chapter Chair, go on line at bpusastl.org or call Sharon Krejci at 636-532-0033.

The hotel deadline is coming: hotel reservations must be made with the hotel before May 25th by calling 314-291-6700 to assure the special rate. The rooms are \$69 per night plus tax with up to 4 in a room. Be sure to tell them you are attending the BP/USA Gathering to get this rate.

Registration forms are also in the registration packet, on the website or available from Sharon at the number listed above. Registrations are \$15 each, maximum of \$45 for a family. Meals are available individually but there is a very good package if you plan to be there the entire time.

You or your chapter may sponsor an ad in memory of your child/children in the Gathering program. These ads run from \$50 to \$300 and forms are available for these too on the web and in the registration packet.

Copies of the St. Louis Cookbook – with both recipes and articles, poems, etc. may be personalized with your child's picture if ordered before the Gathering. Forms are in the packets and on the web.

Donations of hand made items will be gratefully received by the Butterfly Boutique also.

You may add your child's picture to the Video Presentation by contacting Dave Simone, 1230 Carrie Wood Dr., Valrico, FL 33594.

Join us in St. Louis for "A Weekend Dedicated to Our Children."

FILLING IN THE HOLES

Lisa Sculley, 1999
BP/USA if St, Louis

Today my husband and I went to the plant nursery and bought some flowers and bedding plants to go in our gardens. Spring is here and the weather is beautiful. Not cold at all! But also not so hot that the thought of puttering in the garden brings a groan of dismay.

I remember my first spring in this house. We were so excited. Our family was nearly complete. Our third son was on his way and we had just had a house built. We were at the plant nursery at least once a week. Our life was busy, bright, untainted by grief.

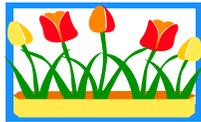
I remember our second spring in this house. How winter hung on, tenacious, unyielding, both outside and inside our hearts. I remember the first warm spring day, I came home from work early, determined to make SOMETHING grow in my life. Maybe I couldn't get my son to live, but I was going to make something live.

Grief was a raw, open wound then and my anger was deep. I was angry at the world, at God, at everything. And so I approached my yard, shovel in hand. I decided I had to have a garden in the middle of my yard. I began furiously digging out the grass, making an oval in the center. It took me hours digging out that oval. But I wasn't through. I then decided I wanted a garden right by my doorway so I dug out that area too. And then I made big holes and tore out all the roots and stones and other junk.

I made big holes in my yard that day. And in the weeks to come I did fill them with things. Funny thing, as I dug those holes and pulled on the grass, my anger drained away. My salty tears mixed with the sweat of exercise and the dirt and ran off

my arms undetected to the outside world. Digging those holes provided an outlet for my anger and my hurt.

Today, I dug some more holes. But this time, my holes were smaller ... and I filled them with small delicate flowers, purple and white. I put bulbs in the ground too, filling other small holes. And I reflected back on another hole. The hole in my heart. No, I can't ever fill it with what "should" be there - my son "should" be almost seven now, full of energy and wanting to plant flowers with Mom. But I have filled that hole with other things ... with love and healing and memories. - and with the lessons and the gifts my son gave me. I never saw those gifts that Spring as I was digging out holes in my yard. And, though I would rather have that hole filled with my son's presence, I am grateful for the gifts he gave - and so I will go on, filling holes.



Judy

From HOPE LINE

A. Sittner

Another Mother's Day!

But a different one this year.

For, you see, I am a mother but my child isn't here.

I am a mother who is hurting for this child who was so dear, as I face this and other occasions each and every year.

I am a mother who feels an emptiness over and over again because I miss THIS child and all that could have been.

I am a mother who cared as I watched my child grow and truly loved her more than anyone will ever know.

I am a mother who has memories and many tears to cry over

regrets I'll have to live with until the day I die.

I am a mother who is thankful for the miracle of birth and all my child taught me about life and my own self-worth.

I just can't stop being a mother because my child isn't here. Because the love we had for each other will continue for years and years.

And so - on this special "Mother's" Day, I will feel within my heart, all the pride, love and joy which are the parts that make me who I am and what I'll always be. A MOTHER - just remember that - please?



MEMORIAL DAY

Sascha from 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.

* * * * *

We have used this before but it seemed especially real for these times both in remembering Memorial Day and in facing the days of the fighting ahead.

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 25-28, 2003: International Death, Grief and Bereavement Conference at the University of Wisconsin LaCrosse Center. Contact 608-785-6773 or cox.gerr@uwlax.edu

June 27-29, 2003: The St. Louis Chapter of the Bereaved Parents of the USA will host the 2003 Gathering of BP/USA in St. Louis, MO. See page 2 for more information.

July 4-6, 2003: The 2003 National Conference of TCF at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Atlanta. Information will be on the web at www.tcfatlanta.org/2003 conference.



BOOK RE-VIEWS

DON'T LET DEATH RUIN YOUR LIFE by Jill Brooke is called "A Practical Guide to Reclaiming Happiness After the Death of A Loved One". It is published by the Penguin Group, Penguin Putnam, Inc. 375 Hudson Street, NYC. I came across it by chance in Books A Million. She talks about not only her own loss but that of other writers, musicians, etc. and of the need to work through one's grief. She also gives advice on how to preserve our memories, trace family histories and reach out to others. Larry King called this a very important book and the New York Post said the book "Should be on everyone's bookshelf...Charts a survival course with dignity and hope." You will find it a helpful book also. Chapters or sections could be used for discussions in Chapter meetings.

CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE GRIEVING SOUL by Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen is the latest book in this series with many good articles shared by persons who have been through the grieving process, published by Health Communications, Inc., Deerfield Beach, FL. It is available in any book store. We hope

that, in future editions, they can list BP/USA with the other support groups that they mention.

REMEMBERING THE DEATH OF A CHILD by Robert R. Thompson, M.D. is a book of "Support and Healing; Hope and Inspiration." As a doctor, he had seen death but only as a "visitor". He writes, "The death of a child takes you on a journey like a hawk carries a rabbit through the sky. What you see and do on the journey is up to you. The journey is not." The book offers hope from someone who has been there. Dr. Thompson was glad to learn about BP/USA and we were glad to receive his book. The book is published by Sugarloaf Publishing House, and you may reach Dr. Thompson at www.sugarloafpublishing.com.

SURVIVING A SIBLING by Scott Mastley is another book about surviving after loss. Scott is a sibling and he writes very well about the feelings and journey of a sibling. As we begin to reach out more to our siblings through our new Sibling representative on the Board of Directors, we will find this book useful with chapters and with siblings. The Box Press, PO Box 1925, Suwanee, GA 30024-0975 is the publisher.

GRIEF AWARENESS

Betty R. Ewart, Editor

I have become aware of two things this last quarter that I would like to share. We live in an area that is very involved in Civil War history. We saw, recently, a doll that was given children when their fathers went off to the war which was made from one of their father's handkerchiefs. The child was encouraged to carry it and have it near to remind her of her father. If the father did not come back from the war, it was often the only thing the child had to remind her of her father. Even in those days, we were aware of our need to feel close to loved ones when we are separated by time, war or death.

Also I heard, on Public Radio, an interview of someone from the committee to select the plans for the rebuilding on the site of the 9/11 disaster. He pointed out that, looking at the two finalists, although the proposal with two open towers like the original towers was beautiful, it seemed that it looked to the past and, would only remind one of sadness. The one they chose looks to the future and speaks of hope. An understanding of bereavement seems to be reaching to all levels of our country.

CIRCLING CATS

Kathryn Zellich, BP/USA, St. Louis, MO

A decade ago, you returned from the vet's and placed your lifeless bundle on the floor, gently unwinding its swaddling cloth. From nowhere the other cats appeared, walking with curious hesitancy. How bewildered they looked as they circled that broken body, patting and sniffing, seeking their vanished comrade, the feline brain too primitive to grasp his absence.

Five years later our daughter died, and we too ponder the mystery, endlessly probing and wailing, recycling the details, resisting the obvious. Round and round our minds spin, desperate for understanding, still no closer to comprehension than those circling cats.

ORIGIN OF FATHER'S DAY

Father's Day was the "brain child of Sonora Smart who, after the birth of her own son, came to realize the sacrifices made by her widowed father during her own youth. She originally conceived the idea in late 1900 when she lobbied for the day to be celebrated on the first Sunday in June, 1910, the birth date of her father, Civil War Veteran, William Smart. She crusaded for the holiday first in her adopted home of Spokane, Washington, and after gaining support from the YMCA, churches and local groups, the third Sunday in June was agreed upon in 1910.

HURTING ON FATHER'S DAY

BP/USA, Tampa FL

As the day approaches, I wonder
how I will react – am I still a
Father?

I will sit quietly never allowing
friends and family to see how I feel.

I miss my child, but I can't allow
myself to "break".

I must remain strong and always be
the "rock".

I wish I could just let someone know
how much I miss my little Angel.
How much I cry and how much I
miss hearing "Dad, I love you."

I am a father but I wonder will I
just pretend as usual that "It
doesn't bother me."

Remember me.
For I hurt too on this special day!



A FATHER WRITES

Bob Steiner
Western Australia, Sept. 1998

A father does not find his job an easy one. The responsibilities he faces are enormous. Everything from finance to being a good role model tests a man's ability to be the best father he can. It is a job charged with emotional, physical and mental challenge. And, at the time it is only one of the many roles he fills. His roles include husband and lover, son, friend, boss, co-worker to name a few. The relationships he has are numerous, complex and always changing. One event in particular can really put all these relationships and roles to the test – the death of his child.

The bereaved father is a unique individual. Unfortunately his uniqueness and attendant problems are not often understood by others or even by himself. His child's death puts extraordinary demands on him. All the roles he fills change and his life is truly not ever the same again. That is not to say it cannot ever be as good, but just the circumstances are going to be different.

When a child dies, it seems that the majority of sympathy is directed towards the mother. This is usually because she is much more open in her grieving, thus it is easy to focus on her emotional needs. But what of the grieving father??? His other roles may prevent him from working out his grief. As husband and provider, he is the one who sees to the practical matters around the death: funeral arrangements, notification of people, arrangement for sibling care, etc. It may be days, weeks or months before things are settled to the point that he thinks deeply about what happened. In most cases, he is back to work and into his usual routine so quickly that he can find himself comforted by this. The impact of the child's death is lessened to a degree. Away from the house, it is easier to "forget" the child and what has happened.

In our society, we are taught in subtle and not so subtle ways that men don't cry and that, in general, they are not at all open about their emotions. Thus, many men are denied a perfectly good emotional release mechanism – crying! Even in the privacy of their own home, they feel they have to "be the strong one." Our experience has taught us that men who use crying as a tool in their grief work have fewer long-term adjustment problems. Since men often suppress their feelings, good and bad, how they are coping with their child's death never comes to the surface.



GRADUA- TION DAY

Susan Abbott, Quincy IL
In loving memory of Jim
Abbott – 1978-1992

Today is Graduation Day – a day when children don the cloak of adulthood. They leave the structure of their home to find the structure of their lives. They scatter in many directions – each to the beat of his own drum, each to follow his own heart.

Today is Graduation Day – and I am sad. My child will not be among his classmates as they are handed their diplomas. My child will not participate in the proms and excitement of this time. My child will not be there. Is he forgotten? Does not one mind remember him or one heart feel his presence? Please Lord, let him be a part of this day even if I don't know it. Let one person for one second think of him and say, "I wish Jim were here today."

For today is Graduation Day – for everyone else's children but not for mine – not for mine. I could wax philosophical and say that he has

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from previous page)

already graduated – that he has made the most important step of all. But this doesn't help the ache in my heart or fill the hole left there. On other days, I can sometimes feel okay that he is in heaven, but, today, I want him here. I want him to go to the prom and wear the cap and gown and receive his diploma. I want to see his smile and take his picture and rent his tux.

I want him going to college and choosing his courses and deciding what his future will be. I want – it does no good to want or to wish. These things can never be. I must face this day as I've faced thousand of others – with longing, with pain, and with strength – God's strength. This is what keeps me from crumpling into a ball of despair – this is what keeps me from giving up and giving in – this is what keeps me from looking down in abject helplessness and lets me look up with new hope. The strength from God gives me the strength to live – and the strength to love – and the strength to continue.

Today is Graduation Day – I think I can live through it – I think I can overcome what it brings with it – I know I can find my way once again through the longing, through the darkness, through the pain 'til once again I see the Light of tomorrow ...

Yesterday was Graduation Day -
And I'm still here....

In your gathering
of memories,
invite your courage
to remember
everything.
Sascha
"The Sorrow and the Light"

HIS SHOES SPEAK TO ME

Ora S. Lewis
BP/USA Orange County CA
In memory of son, Gregg Lewis

His shoes still sit on the closet floor
Tho' he's been gone a decade and more.

Some days my memories are a bit hazy.

Is it a nightmare or am I going crazy?

I go to the closet and there are his shoes.

It's easy to see they really were used.

The prints of his feet are still inside.
He really did live but too soon he died.

Reality returns, with his shoes on the floor.

How long will they be there? 'Till I need them no more.

His bronzed baby shoes sit on a shelf.
These baby shoes speak of a life just beginning.

The work shoes tell about life and its ending.

With the passing of years, some peace I've attained.

But the happiness I once knew cannot be regained.

Yet there's much about life I still want to live.

To my family and others, I still yearn to give.

I've cried many tears, felt the guilt and the pain.

My grief has diminished and I can laugh once again.

Let the joy of your loved one's life
Begin to take the place of
The hurt and anger of the death.
Darcie D. Sims
"Footsteps through the Valley"

WHAT IS LEFT?

Betty Stevens
Baltimore Metropolitan Chapter
BP/USA, Baltimore, MD

When a child dies, you ask, among other questions, what is left? A beautiful, sensitive, intelligent child has died. What can be left after such a crushing blow? Others will point out that you have a spouse, other children or grandchildren, perhaps relatives or friends; they are left.

You read books on bereavement, scarcely remembering what you have read; you attend meetings, talk with others who have suffered a loss like yours. If you are fortunate, you have one or two friends who, while they cannot fully understand, are there to love and listen. Perhaps there is a therapist who guides you in your search for an answer. But, for a long while everything you read or hear has little meaning and certainly cannot provide the answer to your question. Or can it? Does all that you have read and heard and experienced finally come together and answered the question of what is left?

For me it does. The answer was thirteen months in coming, but how clear it comes now. *I am left.* That's it! *I am left* and I have been left with the love of my child. It is a new love; it is different, more intense; it is understanding; it need not be reciprocated; there are no strings attached. I love this love of my child. It warms and comforts me. It is a wonderful love, but I cannot keep it. It is too precious to keep to myself. I am left with the love to spare and love to share. It will never run out. My child will always be with me to replenish it. I have found my answer. *I am left to share my child's love with you.*



**BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA
MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

John & Therese Goodrich	In loving memory of Paul Kinney
Russ & Linda Horn	In loving memory of Paul Kinney
John M. McCrillis	In loving memory of Paul Kinney
Donald & Barbara Cook	In loving memory of Paul Kinney
North Texas Chapter of BP/USA	In loving memory of Paul Kinney
Mitch & Renee Dudnikov	In loving memory of Renee's mother, R. Zimmerman
Tanya & Rod Carlson	In loving memory of Troy Carlson
Bill & Florence Wolfel	In loving memory of Sandy Wolfel
Celeste Cheatham	In loving memory of her son Charlie Kinnerly
St. Louis Chapter of BP/USA	In loving memory of the children of the Chapter
Susan & Gerald Fox	In loving memory of Bill and David Fox
Carol & Bill Paulson	In loving memory of David William Paulson
TCF North Central Iowa Chapter	In loving memory of the children of the Chapter
Carole & Don Moore	In loving memory of Donna Lee Moore
Sidney & Juliet Sanderson	In loving memory of Sid Sanderson, Jr.
Elsie & Reezin Swilley	In loving memory of Chip Swilley
Donald & Barbara Cook	In loving memory of Brad Walk
Marion County Florida BP/USA	In loving memory of the children of the Chapter
Central Arkansas Chapter BP/USA	In loving memory of the children of the Chapter
Stan & Joanne Moran	In loving memory of Randi Sue Eyre

If your donation should appear on this list, and does not, we apologize. If you will notify John Goodrich of the gift and the memorial, we will acknowledge it in the next Newsletter. Thank you.

Since BP/USA is a qualified charitable 501(c) (3) organization, your donation may be tax deductible. Donations may be designated as follows: in memory of a loved one, in appreciation for someone or something in our life, the Gathering costs, brochure printing or the newsletter printing and postage. If there is no designation, the money will be used for general operating funds. Please carefully designate how you would like the donation listed on this page. We thank our chapters individual members and other friends for their generous support of BP/USA and its work.

Contributions should be sent to: John Goodrich, PO Box 95, Park Forest, IL 60466.

I am not an optimist, because I am not sure that everything ends well.
Nor am I a pessimist, because I am not sure that everything ends badly.

I just carry hope in my heart.
Hope is a feeling that life and work have a meaning.
You either have it or you don't,
regardless of the state of the world that surrounds you.

Life without hope is an empty, boring and useless life.
I cannot imagine that I could strive for something if I did not carry hope in me.

I am thankful to God for this gift. It is as big a gift as life itself.

Vaclav Havel
Playwright and Leader of Czechoslovakia