



A JOURNEY TOGETHER

NEWSLETTER OF THE BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

VOLUME XI NO. 2 SPRING 2006
(April, May and June)

IN THE SPRINGTIME OF YOUR GRIEF

By Judi Fisher, Cleveland, Ohio
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Spring has fragile beginnings; a tiny shoot of green that emerges from the cold earth, a hint of pastel against the brownish grass, a bud that awakens with the morning sun. Sometimes spring comes so quietly we almost miss it, but once it begins, it is impossible to ignore the daily growth and change. The morning sun brings sounds that were not there before. The breeze carries warmth that invites us to venture outside of ourselves. A promise is released with the budding and blossoming surrounding us. Hope emerges for the beginning of a new season; change is in the air.

What we experience in the springtime of the year is what we experience in the springtime of our grief. There begins to be a glowing radiance. The radiance is not just around us; it is within us. A gradual warming of the heart silences the chill of intense pain. The natural unfolding of the grief process moves gently to remind us that we will survive.

Life is changing and growth emerges through the changes. The song of our hearts that seemed off key begins to experience a harmonious blend of the past and the present. The songs of the birds invite us to join them in a celebration of new life. In the springtime of our grief, there can be a new song for us to sing. It will be a song we have composed through the heartache of loss.

Heartache of loss. Optimism for a better day may awaken us one morning. Hearing laughter and realizing that it is coming from ourselves gives us promise for today. Dreams and hopes for a better tomorrow shine brightly with the morning sun.

Surviving the winter of our grief with the openness to embrace change is a decision to embrace loss and integrate its impact into the fabric of our lives. It can be a willingness to explore new possibilities that create a different landscape to behold. We can make a decision that we will begin to appreciate what we still have, not focus on what is missing.

We will know when we have made that decision. Something buds; something opens. The harshness of winter is softened with new life and new growth. It is not something we can force; it is something that unfolds when the time is right. The springtime of grief arrives with no dramatic entrance, no flashing lights. The stillness of the beauty unfolds and captures our attention. It is happening around us, but it is also happening in us.

If spring has already crossed the path of your personal journey of grief, rejoice! But if the chill of winter remains in your heart, be encouraged; spring is on its way. Look for it, expect it, and it will be yours to experience around you and in you!



MARCH

By Shirley Ottman,
BP/USA, Denton, Texas
From "The Slender Thread"

Crocuses reach for the light above,
winds sigh around my windowpanes,
cedar wax wings journey to the north
and stop to gorge on berries
in our holly trees.

Forsythia blooms yellow, bright and bold
against the graying afternoons.
All these are harbingers of spring.

Oh, that this spring will bring to me
and you a sweet comfort in new life,
new hope, new peace, new joy,
new strength to meet our challenges,
new thankfulness for all that is and all
that's yet to be,
and new delight in memories
of what once was-of who once was-
and calm surrender to a love that
never dies.

EASTER THOUGHTS

By Sascha
From WINTERSUN

One more winter overcome,
one more darkness
turned to light and promise.

Winter is the price for spring.
Struggle is the price for life.

Even in sorrow, remember
to prepare your heart
for celebration -
next spring perhaps.
Or the spring after that...

**BEREAVED PARENTS OF
THE USA**

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**NOMINEES FOR THE
NATIONAL BOARD OF
DIRECTORS OF BP/USA**

There are three vacancies to be filled on the Board of Directors for 2006-2007. All three will be elected for three year terms. The nominees are Jack Ewart, West Virginia; Martha Honn, Southern Illinois; Kevin Hunsaker, Arkansas; Linda Long, Missouri; and Beth Reynolds, Texas. Chapters will be receiving biographies of these people and ballots at a later time. If you have any questions, please contact Beverley Hurley at bee.hurley@gte.net.



**FROM
THE
EDITOR**

Bereaved Parents of the USA is an organization for bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings regardless of race, creed, religion or cause of death. As an organization, we do not take political or religious stands.

I have been deeply saddened lately to see that there have been protestors with very hurtful signs at the funerals of service men and women. I even heard of one family whose house was egged and they received calls telling them that the caller was glad their son had died because he had no business in Iraq. Regardless of anyone's belief regarding the war, this kind of cruelty is unforgivable.

I think that this says to BP/USA that, when we see the announcement of the death of a service person, we should offer our sympathy to the family and offer to have them attend our chapters, receive our newsletter, visit our web site, etc. They are most of all persons grieving the loss of a loved one and that we can help them by letting them know that we care.

Those of you who have been helped by the "The Christmas Box" and other books of Richard Paul Evans or have been moved by the Angel of Hope statues dedicated to children who have died, may want to know that his mother died on Valentine's Day. "The Christmas Box" was written for her to let her know that he understood how hard it was for her when her daughter died. He has said that it was difficult for his mother but that she was thrilled when his book later was published and became so popular helping so many. He says that he knows she is with her beloved Sue again. He also says "I believe her words, that someday we will meet again in a time and place where all broken hearts will forever be made whole. And if, in the vastness of an infinite universe, or the quietness of men's hearts there is such a place as heaven, it couldn't be anything more than that." We offer our sympathy to him and our thanks for

as heaven, it couldn't be anything more than that." We offer our sympathy to him and our thanks to him for sharing his mother and her story with us.

Please note that his book will be available at the Gathering this year and that the closing of the Gathering will be a visit to an Angel of Hope Memorial in St. Louis where we can place flowers in memory of our children.

We have heard from a woman who works as a story producer with a TV production company in Toronto. She is doing background research for a new documentary series about people who have gone through significant transformations in their lives precipitated by a single event that ultimately led to a positive change in their lives. She heard of BP/USA and feels that many of us have stories to share. If you would like to be a part of the research for this documentary, she would be happy to have you write her or she would call you and talk with you. Her name is Christina Heidorn, AJE Productions, Inc., 300-99 Atlantic Ave., Toronto, Ont. M6K 3J8. Her phone number is 416-533-1540 and her web site is www.ajetv.com.

PETERSON AWARD

Nominations may be made now for the presentation of the Roy and Juanita Peterson Award at the 2006 Gathering. This goes to someone who has been active in helping the bereaved through their local chapter and through the National BP/USA. Past recipients have been Roy and Juanita Peterson, John Goodrich, Mary Cleckley, Paul and Pat Kinney, Shirley Ottman, Mitchell and Renee Dudnikov, Betty Ewart and Pat Moser. If you would like to nominate someone, please contact Pat Moser, President, at President@bereavedparentsusa.org or by letter at 3921 S W 5th Ave., Ocala, FL, 34474-6716.

HARD TIMES

By Dennis Klass, Former
Advisor to BP/USA St. Louis and
National BP/USA

How to hold on and how to let go...How to lose and how to keep...these are hard problems for the bereaved parent.

We want to keep the child in our life, we want to remember the child, we want to save those parts of our life which are tied to the child.

Yet, at the same time, we know that the child is dead-things can not be as they were before. The memories of good times now bring pain. The memories of bad times raise guilt and feelings of powerlessness.

The end of the guilt process is a resolution of this tension between holding on and letting go. We can remember and be sad; we can remember and be happy; we can remember and just be.

But it takes a long time for such a resolution and while we are in the process, we find ourselves pulled to the one side and then to the other.

Sometimes we want to leave the room exactly as it was. Other times we want to put everything away so nothing reminds us of the child.

Sometimes we want to talk over and over again about the events of the death; other times we want to avoid the topic altogether.

Sometimes all we have left of our child is our sadness, and we don't want to give up our grief for fear of giving up on our child.

All that is a normal process. We go through it at any death. When our parent dies, the problem is how to hold onto our childhood and youth and yet give up our childhood and youth. So we find ourselves keeping a bit of our parents in ourselves by

becoming a little more like them. I was once talking about this in a class when suddenly a woman blurted out, "So that's why I wanted to use the good china so much a year after she died."

It is a lot harder to give up the child and keep the child at the same time, because, when our parents die, we have to lose and keep our past. When our child dies, we have to lose and keep our future.

In our grandparents day, losing a child was an expected part of life. But it is not in our time. Few of us ever knew anyone else to whom it had happened. So we have few models.

Each of us seems to have to find out our own way for ourselves. It is a hard and lonely journey.

But the experience of others who have gone down this valley is that there is a resolution at the end. We can hold on and let go.

If we can, for a moment, share with others on the same journey, we can help others find directions and let them help us.

That is what Bereaved Parents is all about.

THAT FIRST MEETING

Jim Dixon,
Springfield, IL Chapter

We get notes from people saying, "When I get the nerve, I'll come to a meeting." I can tell you, it took a lot to decide to go to our first meeting, but I'm thankful we did go. I look back. I wonder if I would have survived without the group. Like many, I didn't talk at first. I couldn't talk and I wasn't forced to talk. I just listened and learned from those who had walked in the same type of shoes and at first crawled just as I was doing.

I think the most important thing I took from my first meeting was hope. Hope that I could survive this. Hope that I could live again, even though at the time I didn't know I wanted to live another minute.

The great thing about the group is you get to hear from lots of people what worked and what didn't work for them. You hear from bereaved parents, the true experts. Then you take a little from each of them and fashion what you think might work for you and then give it a try.

Why don't you take a chance and come next month?

UNDER YOUR ANGEL'S WINGS

(From a card that came with
an angel light catcher)

We each have an angel guardian,
Sent from Heaven above.
She keeps us safe & guards
our life-
Giving guidance, mixed with
love.
If you listen very closely,
You'll hear whispering voices
sing,
And for heavenly comfort
every night,
She tucks you peacefully under
her wing.

JOURNEY

By Sascha in WINTERSUN

The journey from grief to hope
does not happen swiftly.
But it happens ,
if you will let your heart
ride along.

2006 GATHERING

We are fortunate to be going again to St. Louis and our 2006 Gathering. Those who went before remember what a great Gathering it was and this one will be even better.

The dates are June 23-26 in St. Louis at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. You should make reservations directly with the hotel by calling 314-291-6700 or 800-227-6963. The room rates are discounted to \$75 a night if reservations are made by June 1 and you may share the room and expense. Be sure to inform the hotel that you are attending the BP/USA Gathering to get this special rate.

Meals will be \$110 for all meals or separate meals may be purchased. Special programs are at all meals. It will be possible to attend the programs even if you are not eating the meal. Registration is \$20 with a family maximum of \$60.00.

Over 100 workshops/sharing sessions will be held covering all aspects of grief for parents, grandparents and siblings. The Gathering will close with a visit to the Angel of Hope in St. Louis where everyone may place a flower in memory of their loved one. If you wish to ride the bus to this, the cost will be \$7.00. There will be a butterfly boutique with items made and/or donated for sale. There will also be a book store. Picture buttons may be ordered and you may have a picture of your child or children entered as a part of the closing session.

For further information and for a registration form, go to our website at www.bereavedparentsusa.org or the Gathering site at www.bpustatl.org. You may also contact the chairperson, Sharon Krejci at 314-878-0890 or the President, Pat Moser at 1-352-854-1275 or by email at president@bereavedparentusa.org.

“Meet me in St. Louis for a “Journey of the Heart”

BOOK REVIEWS



I WONDER WHAT YOU DO ON YOUR FIRST DAY IN HEAVEN by Phoebe Welsh of Kirkwood, MO, is a book which deals with questions about what heaven is like. It is written about the birth and death of a child and the questions the parents face. It is written in a child-like fashion and is a short book but the content would be helpful for any age. The illustrations are beautiful. For information Contact Less is More Publishing, PO Box 220424, Kirkwood, MO 63122 or visit the author and order at the web site, www.aboutheaven.net.

LIFE! HOW I LOVE YOU! By Barbara Beasley Murphy, with illustrations by Elena Baca, is about a young woman names Lily whose family is under heartbreaking stress after the death of her sister, Jacqueline. She visits the Museum of Fine Arts in New Mexico and has conversation with a self portrait by Frida Kahlo and with one of the museum personnel. It is a good story interweaving the family, the death of her sister and her visits to the museum. Judy Blume, well known author of children's books says “The portrayal of a loving family under extreme stress is heartbreaking, yet thanks to Lily's narration and wit, never sentimental.” The book is published by the Museum of New Mexico and can be ordered from them at 3721 Spirit Drive SE, Albuquerque, NM. 87106-5631. You may contact the author at bbm77@cybermesa.com.

LET IN THE LIGHT by Patricia H. Livingston is a book about “Facing the hard stuff with hope”. She starts the book by telling a story about her grandson who got up one morning and walked into a door. He explained that “There was too much dark in my eyes!” She talks about all the dark that we face these days with

natural disasters, wars, attacks like 9/11 and our personal tragedies such as the death of a loved one, loss of a job, etc. She reminds us that early in the Bible, we read “Let there be Light”. She shows us the many ways we can let light into our lives again. I especially liked her chapter, “Meeting in Kindness” where she tells us that “In times of darkness, helping others lets in the light.” She gives examples of things that people did after 9/11 and after Katrina. In this chapter and others on prayer, trust, etc. she gives examples of ways that the light can dispel our darkness – that we have the power to dispel our darkness and the darkness of others and to return to the light. Her book is published by Sorin Books, Ava Maria Press Inc., PO Box 428, Notre Dame, IN 46556 or you may contact them at www.avemariapress.com.



UPCOMING EVENTS

May 20, 2006: A conference of Hope and Healing will be held by the Anne Arundel County Chapter of BP/USA. It will be from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Calvary United Methodist Church in Annapolis, MD. Registration is \$25 due by May 6. For more information contact Pat Schultz 410-255-7760 or by email at jim.n.pat4@juno.com.

June 23-26, 2006: BP/USA Gathering in St. Louis. See first column on this page for information and contact persons.

July 14-16: TCF National Conference in Dearborn, MI. For further information visit the web site at www.compassionatefriends.org.

HOW LONG SHOULD I REMAIN PART OF A SUPPORT GROUP?

By Kay Bevington, Van Wert, OH
BP Friend and Workshop Leader

Many of the “seasoned grievers” are often asked, “Why do you still go to those bereavement support groups and/or conferences?” Some of our friends and/or family members question our need for being a part of a support group after several years. Non-bereaved members of society think we should “be over it” and “get on with our lives” since it’s been so long since our child died. People do not realize that our deceased child will always be our child and that we are “recovering bereaved parents.” Many people in society have the opinion that it is o.k. to be a “recovering alcoholic” but not o.k. To be a “recovering bereaved parent!” My response to those questions has been, “Rhonda lived. I return to the meetings and/or conferences because these people have become my extended family. I can also now assist others on their grief journey as other bereaved parents once companioned me on my journey. I does not matter how long we’ve been bereaved; there seems to be situations that occur in our lives when it is helpful to be able to network with others like ourselves.”

It might also be beneficial to share with those who question us to mention how society honors political figures, movie and television stars and other prominent individuals. Think about all of the documentaries that are on television near the birth/death anniversary of people like Princess Diana, John Kennedy, and other individuals. How many times do people pay to view a prominent individual’s home or estate of a person that is deceased or stand in line at a post office to purchase a commemorative stamp that honors someone that is deceased? Our children were more important to us than any prominent person so give yourself permission to commenorate

commemorate your child’s life by attending bereavement functions and doing things to honor his/her life.

Each of our grief journeys will be as unique as our fingerprints. We cannot measure time by how someone else is handling his/her grief. Our needs will depend upon our personality traits, previous life experiences, tragedies we’ve encountered since your child’s death, coping skills we had and have learned, the support system that we had and still have and the relationship that we had with our child. Some bereaved parents may find that they will only need to attend bereavement functions for a few years while others may make a lifetime commitment of honoring their child and helping others.

Some bereaved parents find the need to attend bereavement functions as there may be some unresolved grief issues that occur later during their grief journeys. The death of a spouse, parents or friends, a divorce, relationships that are severed, a change or loss of job and relocation may be any of several causes that make us feel that we are going through the early phases of our grief once again.

We may also find that physical changes in our bodies will cause us to need the support of other bereaved parents much later in our grief.

We, as bereaved parents, will always need to hear our child’s name, see their photos, listen and tell stories about him or her. Time alone does not heal our deep wounds but doing our grief work with time eases the intense pain of early grief. It is perfectly normal to attend support group meetings and conferences twenty, thirty or forty years after our child died as we are the veterans that can companion others on their grief journey and honor our child’s memory as **OUR CHILDREN LIVED!**



A SURPRISE ON MOTHER’S DAY

Veronica Douglas Granite City, IL
BP/USA – St. Louis, MO

I have always loved butterflies, but ever since we lost our beautiful and only daughter Emily Anne, these lovely winged creatures have taken on a different meaning for me. (I know many of you share this very same thought.) I don’t know if it is because I am more aware of my surroundings now, but many more of these fascinating beauties “fly in and out of my life”!

Our precious daughter, Emily, and her sweet boyfriend Dan were taken from us forever on October 6, 2002 in a car accident. Ever since then, I have had delightful monarch butterflies of all sizes follow me everywhere! I have seen them landing on my coneflowers in the garden, fly around the front porch (they were not out there at first) and even land right on the top of the lamppost Two years ago, my husband and I went to Key West and had a rental home with a swimming pool. After we had been swimming for a short time, a dazzling monarch butterfly started circling the pool.

The best butterfly story happened this past Mother’s Day, 2005. Our family was having a double celebration (my nephew’s birthday is around Mother’s Day) at my brother’s home. Our family is “picture-taking crazy”. (I am so thankful for that!) So when it was the Douglas family’s turn to get their picture (my husband Dave, our son Josh, my nephew Chip and me) guess what landed right on my shoulder” You guessed it...a small monarch butterfly! And it stayed there until after the picture had been taken! I know Emily is with us all the time because she is a part of the universe now. I also know how much her family meant to her and how much she loved each one of us in her own special way...Thank you, darling daughter for my mother’s day gift!!

FATHER'S Day - A Grandfather's View

From the heart by Bill
"Pa Paw" Fausett
Central Arkansas Chapter BP/USA

Now well into my fifties and knowing Father's Day is approaching once again, I find myself recalling my very first. It was a beautiful Sunday morning, June 16, when I became a father for the first time, a Father's Day I will never forget. Already prepared with the traditional cigars, I had to be a turkey strutting his stuff. Many of the Father's Days after that were spent away from home working and never stopping to think just how special this day really is.

After my retirement, a few years back, I became a grandfather and my whole life changed. I never dreamed I would be changing diapers, giving bottles, in the middle of the floor playing dolls, or outside watching bugs, birds, butterflies, bees, squirrels, rabbits, and loving every minute of it, with the most beautiful granddaughter anyone has ever seen (my opinion, of course). That was a special year for me. I found myself asking the wife, "Did our kids do that?" many times, and she telling me, "yes", but you were working or just didn't notice. My granddaughter taught me more about the beauty of life and how much I had missed in the short time she was here than I could have ever imagined! We lost her at 13 months, 2 days and 22 hours due to a very rare genetic disorder and again my life changed.

This Father's Day will be spent with my family and a new grandson, now 2 1/2 years old and a great little guy. I see much of the same inquisitive nature in him. Making sure each visit he has is a good time, I think I do it out of obligation and not with the joy that I once had, but when you see that smile on his face, you know you made his day a little better and that makes it all worthwhile.

Memories are a part of our past and some become a part of our heart.

At the end of Father's Day, when everyone has gone to bed, I will sit at my desk, drink one more cup of coffee, say a prayer and, once again, tell my granddaughter just how much I love and miss her and somehow know she knows and in my mind will hear her say

*Pa Paw, I love you too.
Take time to smell the roses.*

(This was written in 2003. Bill is the creator and webmaster for the BP/USA chapter website: www.bpusathecentralarkansaschapter.org)



FATHER TO FATHER

There's a New Man in Town

By Dave Simone
BP/USA Tampa Bay Chapter

My son is dead! The moment I was told my son died in an auto accident, there was a new man in town. The old man would find a way to fix "it" or at least make "it" better. The new man couldn't fix a thing. Oh, he could make arrangements, settle accounts, acknowledge condolences as though he were really there but the new man was far off, living in a protective shell hardened by disbelief and shock. Yes he did things, but he didn't feel in the old ways, he was far off being reborn.

My wife's grief would bring the new man back, at least for awhile. There was no fixing her, just acknowledgment of the hurt and pain and helplessness we both felt. I was there for her as she was there for me and we bonded in our grief at depths we did not know existed. My son did not die to make our marriage better or worse and

worse and his death did not change what it fundamentally was and is. There is, however, a new level where we meet to hurt and heal together.

When a baby is born, there are pains and tears followed by profound joy. If that baby dies before his parents, there is pain and tears and a longing for peace. No man can anticipate the number of tears that will flow during his rebirth. The half hour drive to work each morning was a time of nothing but tears and pain and guardian angels to provide safety for myself and those around me. The new man was every bit the good driver the old man was, but he wasn't there- he was far off being reborn in those unstoppable tears. Peace was nowhere to be found.

I am not going into detail into the many ways I have changed. Believe me, I have changed and so have you fellow bereaved fathers. I cannot believe my son died to make me a better man. I do believe that my son's death shocked me into holding dear all that was always precious to me with the new knowledge that "it" can all end in an instant and neither the old man nor the new man can ever fix "it". The protective shell is fading away and real peace is finding its way into my heart and soul. But the shell will never be completely gone and the peace will never blend into complacency. We are new men with new priorities and new things to do. This does not mean we abandon all that was of the old man; the newness is in our attitudes and understanding and acceptance of vulnerability.

(Many of you know Dave for the wonderful closing program he and his wife present each year with the pictures of all of our children. The memories that brings back to all of us are tremendous. He can be very proud of the new man he is and we know his beloved son is proud of him and his wife for all they do to help other bereaved persons.)

**BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA
MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

**James & Demarius Aman
Bill & Florence Wolfel
Shirley Ottman
Russ & Linda Horn
Marion County Chapter, FL
Jack & Betty Ewart
Anne Arundel County Chapter, MD
Celeste W. Cheatham
Tanya & Rodney Carlson
Theresa & Larry Valentine**

**In loving memory of their son, Mark Allan Aman
In loving memory of Sandy Wolfel
In loving memory of Pete Moser's mother Jean
In loving memory of their son, David
In loving memory of their children
In loving memory of Pete Moser's mother, Jean
In loving memory of their children
In loving memory of her son, Owen
In loving memory of their son, Troy
In loving memory of their son, Sean – a twentieth
anniversary memorial
In loving memory of her husband, Mitchell, and
her mother**

Rene Dudnikov

Donations in loving memory of Michael Calvert by his family and friends

If we missed listing a donation, we apologize. If you will notify the Treasurer of your gift and the memorial, we will be sure it is acknowledged in the next Newsletter. Thank you. Our Treasurer is Dave Hurley and he may be reached at 3805 West San Juan Street, Tampa, Florida 33629-7819, by phone at 813-831-2588 or by e-mail at david.hurley@gte.net. Since BP/USA is a qualified charitable 501(c) (3) organization, your donation may be tax deductible. The work of BP/USA is financed entirely by contributions. All the leaders, national and local, are volunteers. Donations go directly to help chapters, to help in the sending of the Newsletter and to keep costs of the Gathering as low as possible. You may designate your donation to any of these areas or to the general work of the BP/USA. If there is no designation, the money will be used for general operating funds. Please always designate carefully how you wish a memorial or gift listed. We thank our chapters, individual members and other friends for their generous support of BP/USA and its work.

A PRAYER FOR SPRING

**By Janis Hiel
BP/USA Ocala, FL Chapter**

**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 adjust my focus
to include healing and growth as possibility in my future.**

**Give me strength to break out of the cocoon of my grief,
but may I never forget it is the place where I grew my wings,
becoming a new person because of my loss.**