

# A Journey Together

National Newsletter of the *Bereaved Parents* of the USA

VOLUME XIII NO. 2 Spring 2008 (April, May and June)



## A BEREAVED PARENT'S SPRING

By Terre Belt, BP/USA  
Anne Arundel County Chapter

Regardless of the calendar or the meteorologists, April marks the beginning of spring for many of us. The world outside begins to awaken from its winter slumber and the sights and sounds and smells of spring abound, from the flowers peeking out of the ground to the birds chirping merrily outside our windows to the smell of the blooming trees as we venture out for our first walk of the season.

This is what spring is all about unless, of course, you are a “newly” bereaved parent and then you might just be oblivious to it all. In fact, you may even resent the reappearance of spring and its symbolic rebirth. The message to you from an “old timer” on this grief journey is to be easy on yourself...it won't always be this hard and just feel whatever you feel. Don't let anyone tell you how you “should” feel this spring (or next).

Like all seasons, spring will have its share of emotional triggers for the newly bereaved—graduations, Mother's Day, planning for summer vacations, favorite flowers and just waking up. But just as April showers bring May flowers...the tears of grief will ultimately sow the seeds of hope and someday you too will see the beauty of spring again.

For those of us who have been on our grief journey for awhile, not only do we recognize (and welcome) the beauty

of spring again, but we also see our children in everything that is beautiful in spring. It is our way of carrying them with us through spring and through all of the seasons. So, as spring unfolds, here's wishing each of you peace and whatever joy you are able to find.



## SPRING HAS COME!

Betty R. Ewart, Editor  
First Written in 2001

*“Spring has come,  
The grass has riz,  
I wonder where  
The flowers is!”*

For some reason that poem, bad grammar and all is going through my head over and over this year. Our Ruthie died on Easter and spring came and I guess the grass and the flowers “riz” that year, but I don't remember it! This year we have had so much bad weather and cold that it seems that spring will never come.

Somehow we expect that, when the weather gets sunny and warm again, and the growth comes back, we will be all well again. Somehow, the fact that what died in the fall and winter and is now showing new life and coming back is not the answer. Then we think, let's have our children

come back now and we can get back to “normal.”

It is hard to look at spring those first years after the death of our child and not have these thoughts. However, if we have a belief and faith in the resurrection, we may one day come to realize that all life is a cycle and there is and will be a resurgence of life at times when it may seem the dreariest.

So, when the grass and flowers begin to come back and when those of us who like to garden begin to plant and clear the garden, we can begin to have hope that we will see our children again some day.

Another lesson spring brings to us is that those flowers, when they come back, are not the same flowers. They have a new life and a new look. We also know that this is true of us. We are not the same people we were before our child died. We “come back” into life a changed person—hopefully a person changed for the better.

So, the grass, flowers and butterflies will soon be back and maybe we can begin to clear the cobwebs and concerns in our lives and become a new spring creation too. It won't happen overnight and maybe not this year, but it will happen!

Somewhere between  
depression and recovery  
lies the beginning of  
HOPE.

Darcie Sims, from  
“Footsteps through the Valley:

**BEREAVED PARENTS OF  
THE USA**

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You will find articles, location of Chapters, links to other organizations and other information on that web site also.

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**FROM THE-  
DESK OF  
THE  
EDITOR**

**THE 2008 GATHERING:** The Gathering will be July 11-13 in St. Louis, MO at the Crowne Plaza Hotel at the airport. Chapter leaders will also have Leadership Training on July 10. We understand that reservations are coming in fast, especially for days before and after the Gathering, so to be sure of getting a room, call the hotel soon. The number is 314-291-6700. Ask for In House Reservations and tell them you are attending the BP/USA Gathering. You do not have to be a member of BP/USA to attend.

**BOOKSTORE:** Centering Corporation will have a great bookstore for us with a large selection of books on the grief process. There will be a session in the bookstore when authors will sign their books. Bailey, the Therapy Dog will also be in the Book Store to meet you.

**THE GATHERING BOUTIQUE:** Pat Kinney, who is in charge of the boutique, has many wonderful things which she and the members of the Louisville, KY, chapter of the National Sewing Guild have made. She welcomes any donations to the boutique from persons or Chapters. Items should be related to butterflies, angels or the theme of the Gathering, *Seeds of Hope*. A Chapter could have a work night to make items for the Boutique. Please let Pat know what you will be providing so that she will be able to plan for the Boutique. If you are not attending, you may mail the items. Please arrange that with Pat too. You may reach her at 1902Emerson Ave., Louisville, KY 40205-2519 or at [patssewing@insightbb.com](mailto:patssewing@insightbb.com).

There is more information about the Gathering on page 3 and you may get information on the Gathering, by contacting us either at [2008Gathering@bereavedparentsusa.org](mailto:2008Gathering@bereavedparentsusa.org) or by visiting [www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org). We are accepting credit cards this year for your convenience.

**NOMINATIONS FOR THE ANNUAL PETERSON AWARD:** Nominations are still being accepted for the Roy and Juanita Peterson Award for 2008. Please send these nominations to Beverley Hurley at [bee.hurley@gte.net](mailto:bee.hurley@gte.net) or call her at 813-832-3175. This person should have been active in some way in BP both at the local level and at the national level. The deadline for nominations is May 15.

**OTHER NOMINATIONS:** The nominations for the National Board have been received and reported to the current Board. The Slate will be put together and mailed to the Designated Member of the Chapter or the Chapter Chair no later than 30 days prior to the annual meeting at the Gathering. If you receive the ballot and are not the Designated Member, please give it to that person or to the Chapter Chair. The DM or Chair should consult with the chapter and return the ballot as soon as possible. Ballots are counted and the results are reported at the Gathering.

There is also the a **"They Really Made a Difference Award."** The persons recognized by this award must have played a part on both the local and national levels of BP and be deceased. This nomination should be made, in writing, by May 15 and sent to the National President, Beverley Hurley, at 3805 San Juan St., Tampa, FL 33629 or by e-mail at [bee.hurley@gte.net](mailto:bee.hurley@gte.net).

**GRANT WRITER:** Beverley Hurley would like to know whether anyone who is an Experienced Grant Writer would be willing to donate their time to help BP get grants particularly for training purposes. If so, please contact her for further information and to tell her your experience and ideas.



## NATIONAL BEREAVEMENT CONFERENCES

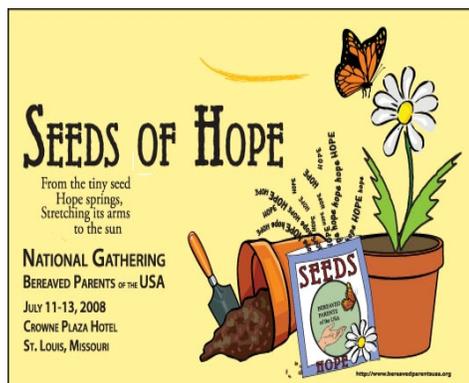
By Shirley Ottman  
From THE SLENDAR THREAD

I have attended many national bereavement conferences since attending the first one where I hoped to learn how to improve the service of our own local support group. I attended succeeding conferences to learn more about healing, to meet with new friends and old from around the country and, finally, to present workshops myself. Each conference enriched my life many times over.

I learned, first of all, that everyone there was just like me: bereaved, searching for an end to the pain, for meaning in the death of one so dearly loved, for meaning in a new and different life, for an ordinary joy in living which eludes us and, at times, seems impossible to attain. The camaraderie shared by bereaved families in such a setting is palpable through a great outpouring of love. We become comrades in a war with pain and loss.

At my first national conference, I shuddered with the knowledge that love really is everything. Surrounded by loving parents who understood my emotions firsthand, by loving parents who continued to love their children as I loved mine, and who were still commented to those children by that love, as I was to my daughter, I found hope surging through my heart. It was a hope born of love between people helping other people. It was a hope to lead me. It was a hope to sustain me through all the tomorrows of my life.

*What wondrous love is this, oh my soul!*



## BP/USA 2008 GATHERING

July 11-13, 2008 is your opportunity to experience what Shirley Ottman has described in her article. You will meet Shirley, who will be presenting a workshop, and others like her and, we hope, find *Seeds of Hope* for your life. The Gathering will be in St. Louis at the Crowne Plaza Hotel.

Any bereaved parent, grandparent, sibling or member of an extended family touched by the death of child or young person in their family is welcome at the Gathering.

For further information about the Gathering, you may visit our website at [www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org) where you can read and download information and registration materials. You may also contact us at [2008gathering@bereavedparentsusa.org](mailto:2008gathering@bereavedparentsusa.org) to ask to have the information mailed to you.

We will have several great speakers including a speaker from T.A.P.S. which is an organization that helps the families who have had a loved one killed in the military service. We also will have a speaker who is a bereaved father, a bereaved brother and a bereaved uncle who will bring us information on how a death affects many people. Alan Pederson will be with us again with his music, written in memory of his beloved Ashley.

There will also be workshops and sharing sessions dealing with many areas of the grieving process. We will have workshops for Siblings and a Sibling Choir again this year. In the evenings there will be Sharing Sessions for any who wish to attend.

Books and CDs by speakers and workshop presenters will be available in the bookstore.

Whether it has been one year or many years since the death of your loved one and no matter what the cause of death, we hope you will join us as we all travel this grief journey together. Make your reservations now!

## GUILT IF ONLY ... IF ONLY... IF ONLY

By Joy and Marv Johnson  
from a booklet CHILDREN DIE

You may hear yourself using those words. Most parents whose child had died have periods when they feel guilty. A part of the guilt is wanting to undo what has been done ... to stop time ... to re-do a day or a minute that might make a difference.

Our culture teaches people to be hard on themselves and blame themselves when anything goes wrong. We tend, then, to feel responsible when children die, too. "If only I had kept him in longer ... If only I had been there ... If only I had known ... If only ... If only."

We are people who want answers. It goes against all our beliefs, hopes and dreams when children die. You will search and look for answers to questions, which sometimes have no answers.

Feeling guilty is one way of getting some kind of meaning into a situation which makes no sense or trying to answer the unanswerable WHY questions.

When you feel guilty, recognize it for what it is ... a sense of guilt and a searching for an answer. If you could have prevented your child's death, you would have. You and your family are not to blame.

### Editors Note:

Joy and Marv are authors of several books about grief and the owners of Centering Corporation, our book store for the Gathering. They will have over 200 books available about many aspects of the grieving process. They will also have Bailey, a Bernese Therapy Dog with them. Therapy dogs are a vital part of many homes, nursing homes and hospitals today and you will see why when you meet Bailey.



## BOOK REVIEWS

“A Father’s Grief: A short story about a long ordeal!” is a very short booklet by a bereaved father, David Haddock. It contains information relating to the death of his daughter, Bonnie Catherine Haddock. Although short, it has a lot to offer. The appendix to the book has poems and articles which are short but very helpful. You may receive copies, at no cost, by contacting David at 1603 Dogwood Terrace, Clinton, MS 39056. Copies will be available in the Bookstore at the Gathering.

“Isabelle’s Dream: A Story and Activity Book for a Child’s Grief Journey” is a book by Betsy Bottino Arenella. Isabella is a three year old whose one year old sister has died. The book is an attempt to help Isabella understand what has happened. The book was featured in the December 2007 issue of REDBOOK and would be very useful with a child and has activity pages. The book is published by Quality of Life Publishing House in Naples, FL and they can be reached at 877-513-0099. The publisher, Karla Wheeler, also includes an article with seven tips for parents of bereaved children. The book will be available at the bookstore at the Gathering.

“Light in Blue Shadows” is a book by Edie Hartshorne which tells the story of the painful five year odyssey of her journey into grief after the senseless death of her 20 year old son. She talks about the fact that one loses not only the child but also sometimes their friends and family and ways to deal with that. Several people who have reviewed the book agree with Isabel Allende who says “... it shows a journey of loss and grief that leads to a place of wonder.” The book is published by Ellsberg Books in Berkeley, CA. You may reach Edie at edie@hartshorne.net.

“THE GRIEVING GARDEN: Living with the death of a Child” is a new book which will be published in April. The book is by Suzanne Redfern and Susan K. Gilbert and will be published by Hampton Roads Publishing Company, Inc. in Charlottesville, VA. They can be reached at 434-296-5096 or www.hrpub.com. It is an interesting book with a lot of helpful material. There are 22 bereaved parents who contributed to this book. Their stories are each told briefly. The book has a series of questions about areas of the grieving process and each of these persons who wish to can speak to each question. The book is arranged so that it could be read in several ways. I found it most helpful to read each person’s story and then read straight through from the beginning. However, if you identify especially with one or more of the parents, you could go through and read just their answers to the questions. Either way, you will find help in this book. One interesting fact that I found was that most people did not seem to find help in support groups but all found help from understanding individuals. This certainly does tell us how important we each are in helping other grievers.

GRIEF: IS THIS NORMAL? is a book by Diana Roscigno, Chapter Chairman of the BP/USA Long Island, NY Chapter. It presents the questions that the tragedy of a child’s death raise in the live of the parents. Her point is that, no matter how bad things are, the griever is not alone and that the problems each faces are the problems all face or have faced. She presents tools and suggestions for facing these questions and problems. Her book is available by contacting Diana at 516-233-4848 or by e-mail at markanthony-mom@yahoo.com. The book will also be available at the bookstore at the Gathering.

“50 WAYS TO COPE WITH YOUR CHILD’S DEATH: a Guide for Grieving Parents” by Norma Sawyers-Kurz is a book that is easy to read and has much to offer. It was written after the sudden death of her daughter, Karen, and is in 10 chapters. The material come

comes both from her personal experience and from research and experiences of others. Each chapter is about coping with a certain aspect of the grieving process and the 50 ways to cope with your child’s death are distributed through out the chapters. The book is published by Marquette Books in Spokane, Washington. They can be reached at 509-443-7057 or at www.MarquetteBooks.com. The book will also be available at the bookstore at the Gathering where Norma will be one of our Speakers.

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### SURVEY

Peggy Lambert Fink, a labor and delivery nurse and a doctoral candidate at West Virginia University has been approved by the University to do some research about what interventions were important to a mother at the time of the death of her baby and her feelings then and now. The survey is online and takes about 30 minutes to complete. If you are interested in participating in this research, contact Peggy at 304-465-1496 or by e-mail at plambert@wvutec.edu.

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### AN UPCOMING EVENT

The National Military Survivor Seminar presented by T.A.P.S. will be held at the Double Tree Hotel in Crystal City, Virginia, May 23-May 26 ending with the Memorial day Ceremonies in Arlington National Cemetery. This is an excellent meeting for the loved ones of service personnel killed in the military. There are workshops for those who attend, and for professionals and a Good Grief Camp for Youth. For information, contact T.A.P.S. at 800-959-8277 or at info@taps.org. Stephanie Frogge, Trauma Specialist with 25 years experience in victim services with T. A. P. S., will be a speaker at the Gathering and hold a workshop to help people understand the particular concerns with military related deaths.



## FATHERS IN GRIEF, A PARADOX FOR TODAY'S MALE

By Mitch Carmody, 2004

The loss of your child can be crippling and leaves deep scars. It changes who we are and how we look at life and how we relate with the world. Five or six years out is still early in the spectrum of child loss but close to the point where positive rebuilding can begin. One thing that I have discovered that helps pull you out of the canyon of despair is compassion for others. It is in giving that we receive and in healing that we are healed.

In the first few years, it is hard to even help yourself much less others and we mechanically maintain, weep a lot and lick our wounds while clinging desperately to everything of our child and, in secret, wish to join them. We rejoin the real world at our own time and it happens when it is right for us. Everyone's journey is different but what remains the same is the huge void that is left in our lives. How we fill it is up to us. I believe we need to fill it with something positive for others that creates a legacy of good in our child's name. We now become their legacy and we substantiate our child's life by the way we live ours.

In our "modern day" society, it is especially difficult for fathers to grieve openly, caught in a catch 22 of how to express the deep pain we are experiencing. Men don't cry, men do not emote, men do not hug (maybe at the funerals), men don't go to support groups, men don't call in sick because they are screaming inside; we are the man of the family. Fathers are the fix it guys, the protector, the strength and the rock the family needs for support. More times than not people will ask a father "How is your wife doing? This must be extremely hard for her."

The modern male is now given (by

women and therapists) license to show emotions, to cry, scream, hug and express their deepest emotions and fears; to let it out. The irony of this is that if he does emote and the family has never seen this behavior, it is taken as a sign of weakness and the spouse and other family members feel they have lost their safety net, their rock of support, and feel even more helpless and rudderless on this journey of pain. If this happens, he may again "clam up" to help with his family and deal with his own pain later. He finds that "letting it out" is an axiom of sophistry and, in doing so, he feels he is letting his family down. Indeed a paradox for the wanna-be sensitive Dad.

Most men cry alone in their cars on the way to work and they explain that the red eyes are due to allergies or a late night. When my father died when I was age 14, my Mom told me I was the man of the family now. I did not cry. I did not grieve. It was not until years later when my losses became overwhelming that I did finally let it out and express my emotions for the loss of my father. It has been 16 years now since Kelly died and I still cry with my wife when we feel our loss together or even when I hear a special song like "Wind Beneath My Wings" and I do not care who is present. You love hard, you grieve hard and it is supposed to hurt. When you recognize your own pain and express it, you automatically become more empathetic to others in similar pain and can help relieve theirs. Heck, now I cry at hallmark card commercials. I can't help it.

When people tell us to find closure, or move on and don't dwell on it, we can but not how they think we should. We find closure in what will never be, let go of the what ifs, the shoulda-woulda-couldas and move on with the knowledge that our children are forever by our side, only in a new relationship. We live in one sphere of existence, our loved one who has died in another, but with faith, undying love and the desire

that we can connect at the seam where our two worlds meet. Love never dies.

In America we are allowed a few weeks to "get over it" and get back on track. The dead are wrapped up neatly, so to speak, and put away and their names unspoken. I find this totally unacceptable. It has been almost 16 years and I still talk about Kelly every day and always will. We will always be bereaved parents but we will not always be experiencing the pangs of grief. Like arthritis, we learn to live with it the rest of our lives and also realize that we shall still have flare ups of pain and discomfort as we move on through the years.

EDITORS NOTE: Mitch is also one of our speakers at the 2008 Gathering.

### A MOTHER IS FOREVER

By Shirley Ottman  
From "The Slender Thread"

This Mother's Day will trouble you—  
it can't be otherwise  
since your son and daughter, too,  
won't be there by your side.

They won't be there to bake a cake  
or bring your cards and flowers,  
nor can they walk into your home  
to brighten lonely hours.

The memories you have of them  
I know will make you smile,  
and you'll remember all the joys  
that made your lives worthwhile.

And so on Mother's Day this year  
and in every other,  
remember they're connected still  
by love to you, their mother.



## HOW TO HANDLE MOTHER'S DAY

By Clara Hinton  
www.silentgrief.com

Special days of any kind can be especially difficult for anyone who has lost a child. The first year following the loss of a child is often filled with days of dread and fear when anniversary dates and holidays approach. Mother's Day is a holiday that is one of the most dreaded holidays of all. A mother grieving the loss of her precious child often spends weeks in fearful waiting of the day, wondering how she will ever make it through.

There is no real way of avoiding Mother's Day. The stores are filled with gifts made and designed especially for mothers and children. Advertisements for gifts on the radio and in the newspaper bombard us every day for weeks prior to Mother's Day. Card and flower shops experience their busiest season of the year on Mother's Day. Reminders of this special holiday are everywhere!

The pain of facing Mother's Day without a child can be the loneliest pain a mother will ever know. There is an empty ache that becomes increasingly more evident as the day approaches and there seems to be no way to find relief. It is wise to share these feelings with other family members and friends rather than to avoid the topic. By sharing how you feel, you can alert others to be more sensitive to your needs during this painful day of sad reminders. Sit down with your family and discuss what you would like to do for Mother's Day. Remember that this is not a time to worry about hurting other's feelings but, rather, a time to make your wishes known.

Remind yourself often that there is no right or wrong way to handle Mother's Day. Some mothers have found it helpful to go away on a mini weekend trip, totally avoiding any church service, special meals or family gatherings that will be too painful to attend.

Other mothers choose to do something special in memory of their child such as take a walk to a quiet place, read a special poem and then release a balloon in memory of their child. The actual releasing of the balloon is known to give mothers a sense of letting go that is quite healing.

Many choose to use Mother's Day as a special day to plant a flower or tree in memory of their child who has died. Seeing something growing is often a visible reminder of the ongoing love a mother has for her child.

Whatever you choose to do, remember not to set expectations too high for the day. Plan to do something that is healing for you, but realize that you will still experience a wide gamut of emotions and many tears will fall.

Because grief is exhausting mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually be sure to eat nutritious food for the day, hydrate yourself with lots of fluids and allow yourself time to rest and be replenished. Grief work is the hardest work you will ever do.

By planning ahead for Mother's Day, you have already crossed a big hurdle in your walk through child loss. Telling others that this is going to be a difficult day for you is a way of building up a support system that will help you get through the day. Remind yourself often that you will make it through Mother's Day and, when you do, you will be one step farther along in this difficult journey we call grief.

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## GRADUATION DAY

By Ann Ianni  
Bereavement Magazine, May 1990  
888-604-4673 (HOPE)

Graduation Day: A day cherished by the graduate and his or her parents; one of the long awaited "rites of passage" to the new status called adulthood."

Laughter is heard among the students; tears of joy and nostalgia from the parents. The teachers heave sighs of

relief and feel a tinge of sadness for the days of laughter and childhood attachments that must be left behind.

Awards are given.  
Gifts are received.  
Parties are planned,  
Future plans are discussed.  
New goals are dreamed.  
There are new hurdles to climb.  
Disappointments are intermingled  
with successes.

All of these things are part of life for those fortunate enough to have survived the dangers and pitfalls of the complicated society in which we live.

There was no prom night at our house.  
There were no award ceremonies to attend.

There were no graduation gifts to buy.  
There was no college to choose.  
There was no future to plan ...  
Jimmy doesn't live here anymore.

His home now is a neatly trimmed patch of grass with bright-colored flowers; a tombstone inscribed with love; a small space carefully tended and watched over lovingly by someone who finds it most difficult to cope, to accept, to go on or to find joy or peace in anything.

Tears are a way of life now and spare time is filled with emptiness.

There is sorrow now for a cheerful young boy who will soon be forgotten by all but a few.

Broken dreams.  
Unanswered prayers.  
Disbelief.  
Loss of Faith.  
And maybe years of endurance of a situation so unacceptable, so intolerable that, from the inner depths, a scream is stifled.

With one word my entire being cries out, "WHY?"



## BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Russ & Linda Horn	In loving memory of their son, David Horn
Celeste W. Cheatham O'Neil	In loving memory of her son, Charlie Kinnerly
Tanya & Rodney Carlson	In loving memory of their son Troy Carlson
Mr. & Mrs. Charles F. Hobbs	In loving memory of Sean Valentine
BP/USA Central Savannah, SC Chapter	In loving memory of their children
BP/USA Central Arkansas Chapter	In loving memory of their children
Bill & Florence Wolfel	In loving memory of their daughter, Sandra Lynn Wolfel
Kristina Delaney-Three Cheerleaders	Unrestricted donation
Mary Murphy	In loving memory of her son, Dylan Thornton

If we missed listing a donation, we apologize. If you will notify the Treasurer, David Hurley, at 3805 West San Juan Street, Tampa, Florida 33629-7819, by phone at 813-831-2588 or by email at david.hurley@gte.net of your gift and the memorial, we will be sure it is acknowledged in the next Newsletter. Since BP/USA is a qualified charitable 501(c) (3) organization, your donation may be tax deductible. The work of BP/USA is financed entirely by contributions. All the leaders, national and local, are volunteers. Donations go directly to help found chapters : there is no charge to found a chapter and each new chapter is given a group of books to help them start a library, some copies of our brochures and the quarterly Newsletter without charge; to help in the sending of the quarterly Newsletter which is sent by mail at no cost; to help to keep costs of attending the Annual National Gathering as low as possible; and to maintain a web site ([www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org)) . You may designate a donation to any of these areas or to the general work of the BP/USA by giving an undesignated gift. Please always designate carefully how you wish a memorial or gift listed. We thank our chapters, individual members and other friends for their generous support of BP/USA and its work.

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### A SACRED PLACE

By Chaplain George Burn, State College, PA  
From the Newsletter of the Western NY BP Chapter

There is a dent in the plaster wall of our family support room in the ER. It's just a little spot, hardly noticeable with the wallpaper over it. Others pass by, oblivious to the small impression in the wall. It seems strangely out of place in an otherwise warm setting of comfortable couches and chairs. I have become friends with that spot, noting its presence each time I enter the room with a family.

It is a sacred place, as sacred as a Chapel. I have spent many hours in this room over the years with families as they await the outcome of a code or the treatment of a loved one following a trauma. The room is familiar to me but alien to the people I meet there. In this place, people begin the journey of altered life. *We did everything we could, but we were unable to save \_\_\_\_\_. I'm sorry.* We watch carefully as people absorb the message. *It can't be true...Oh, my God!* We offer support, feeling terribly helpless under the weight of so great a burden. Our tools are hugs and tissues, touches of the hand, prayer and caring, but seemingly inadequate words. We watch as the news becomes real and creeps slowly from head to heart, from denial to awareness. We only get to probe the perimeter of the cavern death creates and the pain it causes. We escort the bereaved to their cars, wondering how people will go on, trusting only that God will, with time, heal the hearts and renew their shattered lives.

One man, several years ago, punched that wall after he was told his baby died from SIDS. It was a spontaneous act of anger and frustration, a true reflection of the moment we all felt. The pain in his hand was of little consequence compared to the agony of his heart. He left an imprint I have come to revere. It became a symbolic intersection of the vertical and the horizontal, the central point at which eternal crossed the temporal, the locus where hope and dreams were crushed by reality and innocence was overwhelmed by experience. It was a place where easy answers compressed under the weight of complex questions disintegrated. It became an icon along the side of life's highway. For awhile that was all it meant. But, as time has passed, it has evolved to mean something else—the barren ground into which seeds for hope in the future were sown. People whom I once met in crisis have returned to say, *You were with me in that little room in the ER when \_\_\_\_ died. I never thought I'd make it but I'm doing better now. Thank you for being with me through the worst day of my life.*

In a hospital, devoid of most sacred symbols, I have found a most inclusive symbol; one that should have a plaque beneath it which says *This spot is dedicated to all people who met their tomorrows in this room.*