From January, 2003 Newsletter

By Lisa Beall
BP/USA Ann Arundel County Chapter, Annapolis, Maryland

January seems like a good time to talk about making changes – New Year’s resolutions are, of course, very popular. The problem with them is they rarely last longer than the thirty-one days of January. Despite our good intentions, we don’t lose the weight, stop smoking the cigarettes, etc.

What kind of New Year’s resolution is right (or even possible) for a bereaved parent or sibling? We might resolve to find something to feel good about each day. But some days, we can barely get out of bed, let alone feel good. Should we abandon our resolutions when we have a bad day? Unfortunately, for bereaved families, consistency is one of the things that we lost when we became bereaved. What we really need is patience with ourselves. Just when you think you are making some progress, a bad day just takes everything out of you. It’s tempting to give up and decide that it will never get better again. But making our way through grief really is a series of tiny steps. We want to feel better, but it will take a long time.

We recommend that your resolutions take the form of gentle reminders – that life has dealt you a terrible blow...that you are not the same person you used to be and never will be...that you will get through this with the help of your family and friends...that life holds promise beyond the pain.

A friend told us recently that her mother grieves for the son who died 30 years ago, especially at Christmas time. Her eyes fill with tears and she longs for the child who has been gone for so long. She misses her child, and she always will, yet she lives a happy and productive life with the family and her church. Life can go on for us, even when we continue to miss and love our children and siblings. We must hold on to that hope for our lives to continue to have meaning. We urge you to resolve to live – not just to live, but to live with meaning. It is possible for all of us to make the New Year a year of promise. Our resolution is to be there to help you make that happen.

(We at BP/USA – chapters and the national board and officers – join Lisa in pledging to help other bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings make this a year of promise!)

The children who were with us in the rush of life, let them now be with us in the peace of spirit.

Sascha
From WINTERSUN

Through the glass,
I touch your face.
I trace your beauty with my fingertip.
I close my eyes and imagine you sitting next to me.
Your head is gently resting on my shoulder like it used to.
I feel your presence with me and I am at peace.
If only for a few moments, it feels like you’re back where you belong.
Through the glass, I touch your face and I remember what you felt like.

By Laurie Lizotte
Bangor, ME

(Laurie wrote this as she prepared herself for the 23rd birthday of her daughter, Jodi, who was killed in a car accident on Jan. 24, 1999. She found us through our website and has joined BP/USA as a Member At Large.)

You will not be cured, but...one day - an idea that will horrify you now – this intolerable misfortune will become a blessed memory of a being who will never again leave you. But you are in a stage of unhappiness where it is impossible for you to have faith in these reassurances.

Marcel Proust
1871-1922
Ballots will be sent to all Chapters and Members-at-Large. Please direct any questions or further nominations to Mitch Dudnikov, Chairman, One Farrington Ctr., Baltimore, MD 21209. We are especially pleased to find so many willing to be considered for a seat on the Board.

FROM THE EDITOR
Betty R. Ewart

It is with deep regret that I tell you of the death of Paul Kinney on December 10, 2002. Paul, along with his wife Pat, worked with the Louisville TCF, later the BP/USA tirelessly. They helped establish the Memorial Garden in Louisville for the Chapter. They were also active in the founding of the BP/USA and hosted the first two Gatherings with the Louisville Chapter. Paul had served as our Treasurer since John Goodrich’s retirement from that position, working for our best interests at all times. Even at a time when Paul was very sick and in the hospital and the Hospice and had much else on his mind, he kept our financial business up to date. We shall miss him and his guidance of our budget and organization. Memorials may be sent to the Louisville Hospice or to our National BP/USA. Notes may be sent to Pat at 1902 Emerson Avenue, Louisville, KY 40205-2519.

We are most fortunate to have John Goodrich step forward to serve as Acting Treasurer and he was unanimously elected to that position by the Board by e-mail action. John was our Treasurer from our founding until he retired. He has been able to transfer the accounts from Louisville to a bank near him – a branch of the same bank. Please send any contributions or business for the Treasurer to him at PO Box 95, Park Forest, IL 60466.

We appreciate his help at this difficult time and the smooth transition he has been able to bring about.

We have three new chapters and are please to announce those: Santa Margarita, CA which is a satellite of our San Obispo Chapter and the South Labourche LA Chapter with Deborah Pitre as Leader. We welcome all these people and wish them the best in their chapter development. We are also finalizing the development of a chapter in Maui! It is good to be growing. We thank for Pat Moser for her work with the chapters! We are also pleased to welcome Vickie Smith and Sue Michalik as the new Co-Chairpersons of the St. Bernard Chapter of the BP/USA in New Orleans. Some of you met Sue and Vickie at the Gathering and we know that they will bring their skills to the Chapter there.

If you know of a place where a chapter might be formed, please let Pat Moser know. She can be reached at 3921 S W 5th Ave, Ocala, FL 34474-6716. If you live where there is not a chapter but would like to join BP, contact Theresa Valentine at 5107 N. 142nd St., Omaha, NE 68164. We receive so many inquiries from our web site so we know there are people out there who need our help.

Speaking of that, our webmaster reports that our monthly average for visitors through 12/03/02 was 92,017. Since many people visit several parts of the web site, our total hits for the year are 935,318. Many of these come as the result of using a search engine. You will find us on Google search as the result of using a search engine. We have over 450 articles. You can do a search of our site on a search engine.

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And what if we are just having a crazy, mixed up, hurting, enjoying, crying, laughing, getting things done in the morning, getting nothing done in the afternoon kind of day? So what! Maybe the next 24 hours will be different.

By concentrating on the NOW, we add up the minutes and the hours. Eventually we complete a day. Days become weeks, then months. Then one day we realize, GEE, I’m feeling a little bit better! A whole lot better! By taking one day at a time, living in the present, I guarantee that life will take on meaning once again.

From DON’T TAKE MY GRIEF AWAY FROM ME by Doug Manning

Grieving is as natural as crying when you are hurt,
Sleeping when you are tired,
Eating when you are hungry
Or sneezing when your nose itches.
It’s nature’s way of healing a broken heart.

A cut finger...
is numb before it bleeds.
bleeds before it hurts,
hurts until it begins to heal,
forms a scab and itches
until finally... The scab is
gone and a small scar is
left where once there was
a wound.

Grief is the deepest wound you have ever had. Like a cut finger, it goes through stages and leaves a scar.

On MEMORIES

From LIVING WHEN A LOVED ONE HAS DIED by Rabbi Earl A. Grollman

Memories – tender, loving bittersweet. They can never be taken from you. Nothing can detract from the joy and beauty you and your loved one shared. Your love for the person and his or her love for you cannot be altered by time or circumstance. The memories are yours to keep. Yesterday has ended, though you store it in the treasure house of the past.

And tomorrow! How can you face its awesome problems and challenges? It is as far beyond your mastery as your ability to control yesterday. Journey one day at a time. Don’t try to solve all the problems of your life at once. Each day’s survival is a triumph.
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@uwla.net

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 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, St. Louis Airport. See page 6 for more information on the Gathering and for contacts for receiving brochures and registration materials.


BOOK REVIEWS

Theresa Valentine has reviewed the following two books for us.

DREAMING KEVIN, The Path to Healing by Carla Blowey, Bereaved parents will certainly identify with the author’s vivid account of her feelings on the day that her son, Kevin, was struck by a car and killed. Complicating those emotions were the fact that, only the night before, she had a nightmare about his death; as a busy mom, she brushed the dream aside and involved herself in the routine of that day. During the early months of her grief, she began to feel that her dreams, which throughout her life had been very vivid, were a way for her to deal with the pain and to confront the spiritual dilemma that many parents experience. Carla’s account of using messages of hope in her dreams to begin to let go of her pain and to reach for a new spiritual center and renewed faith may be encouraging to others grieving the death of a precious child.

QUIT KISSING MY ASHES by Judy Collier is a mother’s account of the “messages” she receives from her son on the other side. The author relates her initial skepticism regarding after death communication and other paranormal activities. But, as a parent looking for reassurance that her child was “all right”, wherever he was, she was willing to explore the communications from Kyle. Sometimes these are direct messages and sometimes they come through Kyle’s communications with others close to him or through mediums that the author and others who knew Kyle have consulted. This book could be useful and informative for parents who are interested in paranormal topics or are looking for signs or messages from their child.

TASTE OF HEAVEN ST. LOUIS STYLE: This is the cookbook produced by the BP/USA chapter in St. Louis. It is a treasured collection of their children’s favorite recipes and the parents thoughts on grief. You may order a special Gathering copy of this, personalized with your child’s picture. If picked up at the Gathering, you will need to order ahead of time and supply a picture. You can get more information or an order form by writing BP/USA-St. Louis Chapter, PO Box 410350, St. Louis, MO 63141.

If a personalized copy is picked up at the Gathering, the cost will be $19 per book. Regular editions are $15. If mailed, there is an additional $3.50 shipping and handling per book.

EVAN’S EARTHY ADVENTURE by Mark Holofcener is a book written by a father about his son’s life and death. It shows the similarities of reactions and feelings that we all have when our child dies. It is published by Beyond Time Books in Groton, Mass.

THE BOOK OF JESSE by Michael Rowe is another book by a father about his son’s sickness and death. He goes into great detail about the son’s suffering, operations, etc. Doctors report on the jacket that this would be a good book for young or student doctors to read that would help them understand what a family goes through as a loved one is put through various medical procedures. The book is available from The Francis Press in Washington, D. C.

A CALL FOR BUTTERFLY STORIES

Judy Hominick, presented a workshop on butterfly gardening for the 2001 Gathering in Dallas. She reports that, “I have been amazed to hear stories from people about encounters with butterflies. The stories also show a comforting connection between butterflies and the death of someone close. For instance, when a dozen monarchs were released at a memorial service held for a young girl’s mother who had died, all the butterflies flew off until one returned to briefly perch on the shoulder of the young girl.”

She asks that if you have had a similar experience with a butterfly and a loss and would like to share it for possible inclusion in a book which she is writing, she would like you to contact her. You can reach her as follows: Judy Hominick, 8619 Richardson Branch Trail, Dallas, Texas 75243. She has a web site at www.riverrunning.com and her e-mail is hominick@swbell.net.

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May I try to tell you again where your only comfort lies?
It is not in forgetting the happy past.
People bring us well-meant but miserable consolations when they tell us what time will do to help our grief.
We do not want to lose our grief, because our grief is bound up with our love and we could not cease to mourn without being robbed of our affections.

Phillips Brooks
“….but you’re not HERE”

By Mel Giniger, in Memory of Amanda
Nevada Member-at-Large of BP/USA

I see your face in my memory, and I speak to your pictures each day,
    But you’re not HERE.
I listen to your voice on tape and read and reread your cards and letters,
    But you’re not HERE
I speak of you as often as I can, to whomever will listen, and, at times, it seems that I can sense your presence,
    But you’re not HERE
I caress the sock and sneaker that you were wearing the day of your accident, It makes me feel closer to you
    But you’re not HERE.
I know that we’ll be together again; it gives me some comfort, but my heart cries out,
    Why, oh why aren’t you HERE?

THE BEAUTY PLACES

Edgar A. Guest

Here she walked and romped about.
And here, beneath this apple tree
Where all the grass is trampled out,
The swing she loved so used to be.
This path is but a path to you,
Because my child you never knew.

‘Twas here she used to stoop to smell
    The first bright daffodil of spring;
‘Twas here she often tripped and fell
    And here she heard the robins sing.
You’d call this but a common place,
    But you have never seen her face.

And it was here we used to meet.
    How beautiful a spot is this,
To which she gayly raced to greet
    Her daddy with his evening kiss!
You see here nothing grand or fine,
    But, oh, what memories are mine!

The people pass from day to day
    And never turn their heads to see
The many charms along the way
    That mean so very much to me.
For all things here are speaking of
    The babe that once was mine to love.

(Editors Note: Many of you enjoy Edgar Guest’s YOUR CHILD
    AND MINE. Many don’t realize that he wrote that one .
This is another one of Guest’s writings that may be less known.)

THERE’S A VALENTINE WAITING FOR YOU

Mary Cleckley
Member-at-Large BP/USA

There is a Valentine waiting for you
    that’s different from all others.
It’s there every month at our meet-ings
    for Fathers, Mothers, Sisters and Brothers.
It’s envelope is made of caring.
    The glue of understanding seals it tight.
This nonjudgmental group who’ve “been there”
    help to take away your fear and fright.
So, come join with us together.
    Read your loving message printed clear
in not only this month’s Valentine,
    but all those throughout the year.
I am afraid. Will I forget my child’s gentle voice? Will I forget that tender touch? No! I will take all the beautiful memories for I was blessed to have this child.

Be patient.

I am told and I read that grieving parents learn from their child’s death and teach others. What am I to learn? What am I to teach? If I am to teach, it should be positive. Whatever can I learn and teach from this journey that is positive? With your compassion and support I can make it. Along the way I will try very hard to learn the positive messages to teach others. More than anything I want my child, my family and friends to be proud of me.

Be patient.

I may cry; I may laugh; I may be angry; I may be at peace at any given time today and today’s tomorrow. But tomorrow’s tomorrow will bring happiness. I am trying to seek that happiness now but I am tired and fragile. I see other bereaved parents who have gone before me. They have made it down this long hard road. I will as well. Be patient.

—Dedicated to bereaved parents who have traveled this difficult road ahead of us.

—This poem is written in loving memory of all our children who have left our lives but not our hearts.
BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA
MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Mitch & Renee Dudnikov                                          In loving memory of son Marc
In loving memory of Renee’s mother, R. Zimmerman
Rosemary Ravella                                               In loving memory of son Arthur Ravella III
Russ & Linda Horn                                                In loving memory of their son, David
Nelson & Mary Koopman                                          In loving memory of their son, Tony
Erwin & Patricia Burton                                        In loving memory of their son, Thomas
Jack and Betty Ewart                                            In loving memory of their daughter Ruthie
James & Demarius Aman                                          In loving memory of their son, Mark
Baltimore Metro Area Chapter                                    In loving memory of their members’ children
Mitchell & Renee Dudnikov                                      Contribution to the 2003 Gathering
Gary & Lynne DeMeco                                             In loving memory of Paul Kinney
Jack and Betty Ewart                                            In loving memory of Paul Kinney
John & Carol Olliges                                            In loving memory of Paul Kinney
Norbert F. Ebert                                                In loving memory of Paul Kinney
Betty Kissel                                                    In loving memory of Paul Kinney
Carl & Renate McDonough                                        In Loving memory of Paul Kinney
Larry & Judy Bizianes                                           In loving memory of Paul Kinney
Bart & JoAnn Magil                                             In loving memory of Paul Kinney
Mitchell & Renee Dudnikov                                      In loving memory of Paul Kinney
BP/USA Tampa Bay Chapter                                       In loving memory of Paul Kinney
Larry & Karen Cook                                              In loving memory of Paul Kinney

If your donation should appear on this list, and does not it may be as a result of our change in Treasurers. We apologize if we missed any memorial and ask that you understand the circumstances and forgive us. 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.

ON MEMORY

When you remember me, it means that you have carried something of who I am with you, that I have left some mark of who I am on who you are. It means that you can summon me back to your mind even though countless years and miles may stand between us. It means that, if we meet again, you will know me, and hear my voice and speak to me in your heart. For as long as you remember me, I am never entirely lost.

Frederick Buechner

From the BP/USA Tampa Bay Chapter Newsletter