I pressed my hands into the snow on my sweet Kyla’s grave, leaving my handprints. Then I drew a heart with my finger. As I walked away, I looked back and saw my own tracks, proof of my love. It was then I realized what a gift the snow was. It had shown me how full of life the cemetery and the world really are.

On my drive back home, I looked around at the shimmering white land before me. I saw that the snow protected and preserved the land beneath it like a warm blanket until the land could once again rise anew.

As I let the van quietly creep into the cemetery, my eyes gazed at the snow and a small laugh escaped my lips. Across the rows and rows of frozen graves were animal tracks going every which way. Birds, rabbits, deer and who knows what other types of creatures had found a quiet, safe place to play. The tracks told of deer leaping over headstones, romping in the snow. There were tracks of rabbits darting in and out of the bushes between the headstones. Bird tracks gently dotted the snow until they disappeared where a winged one had taken flight.

I parked the van and stepped out into the glistening snow. As I walked towards my daughter’s tiny grave, I saw that a bird had visited her earlier, and that a rabbit had made a resting place under the bushes near her grave. A set of tracks even went back and forth between a pinwheel (Kyla’s Grandma had left at the grave) and a bush. What a wondrous sight! My little angel even had visitors when I could not be there! I looked and there were two small deer running after each other. They stopped to look at me, and I at them. Tears spring to my eyes and my heart soared. What majesty! They stood there still for a second and then they bounded off and over the fence.

I turned to the van to gather a load of snow and placed it in a pile near the pinwheel. A small rabbit appeared, and darted in and out of the bushes near my daughter’s grave. I watched as it browsed the leaves that had fallen from the bushes.

I knew the van would have to remain outside today, so I placed the snow nearby Kyla’s grave, and settled into a long wait. I waited for the sun to appear, and for the snow to melt. And for the world to come to life again.

From BEREAVEMENT Magazine
888-604-HOPE or
www.bereavementmag.com

WINTERSONG

Season of lights,  
Season of love and peace,  
Season of shadow,  
Season of memories,  
Season of warmth and joy,  
Season of secret tears:  
Give us the courage to laugh again,  
Give us the vision to hope again,  
Give us the power to love again.

For all our new seasons  
And all our new years.

Sascha
From WINTERSUN
Remembering her at this season
BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

_A Journey Together_ is a national newsletter, published quarterly by Bereaved Parents of the USA.

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Our web site is: http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org

FROM THE EDITOR

If you receive this newsletter a little late this time, it is because I fell and fractured my pelvis. I am getting around in a wheel chair and it has slowed me down. Sorry to be late.

We were all saddened in September by the death of Gary DeMeco. Many of you may remember him and Lynne from past Gatherings. He was also Paul Kinney’s brother-in-law. We express our sympathies to Lynne and thank her for making BP/USA the organization to receive gifts in lieu of flowers.

John Goodrich has agreed to serve as proxy for the 2004 Board of Director Elections again this year. Chapters and Members at Large will be receiving ballots and information from John, including biographies for those of you who may not know these people. We ask that you return your vote to him. The slate this year includes – for representative of Chapters: Donna Corrigan of Hinsdale, IL, Jack Ewart of Lewisburg, WV, Beverley Hurley of Tampa, FL and Carol Welch of St. Louis, MO. Two of these are to be elected. Theresa Valentine is unopposed on the ballot for representative of Members at Large.

The Chapters and leaders in St. Louis sent the National a check from money that was left after all the bills were paid. We were pleased to get this and it will be available for expenses for future Gatherings to keep the costs down and help the sponsoring chapters with their budgets.

At our October Board meeting we discussed the best use of our Web site and you will see some new things there soon. It has been updated too showing new chapters and changes in leadership. Much of our time was spent at the Gathering site, discussing and helping Dolly Criswell and her great committee plan to make it one of the best. Plan to come!

With regret we learned of the death on December 9 of Sascha. Anyone who has read a newsletter of the many support groups has read her work. She very kindly sent copies of her books to all of our chapters just after BP/USA formed and all of us have been helped by her writings. She came to the USA from Germany in 1947. Her son Nino Hendee drowned in 1957 and her daughter Eve Hendee took her own life in 1972.

There is a section called “Sascha’s Place” found at www.geocities.com/griefhope/sascha1.html. BP/USA has posted a memorial to her there. She truly will live on in her writings and memories of her forever.

Here is a poem from the web site by Sascha which says so well what she felt and shared with us.

WISH

I wish you gentle days and quiet nights.
I wish you memories to keep you strong.

I wish you time to smile and time for song.

And then I wish you friends to give you love, when you are hurt and lost and life is blind.

I wish you friends and love and peace of mind.

~ Sascha

THE GATHERING

Information about the 2004 Gathering will be out soon and will be sent to all Chapters and Members at Large. Others who want to be sure to have registration forms and information, contact Dolly Criswell by e-mail at BP2004Gathering@aol.com. You may call her at 843-762-4022 or write her at 1717 Oak Point Road, Charleston, SC.

Remember: the Gathering is July 9-11 at the Clarion Hotel-Charleston Airport, Charleston, SC and the theme is LET THEIR LIGHT SHINE.
CONGRATULATIONS
By Sarah Ryan, St. Louis, MO
From Candlelight of 2002

Congratulations! Why is she congratulating me, you ask? Well, I'll tell you. I congratulate you on surviving without your link to the past. The day death visited us, we lost our link. We have very few, if any, memories that do not include our sister or brother. Our lives were intertwined throughout childhood. Our co-conspiring days of painting the dog or keeping that secret (shh! Don't tell mom or dad), those days are over. We long to take back the mean words spoken or say I love you one more time.

I congratulate you for surviving the present. Everyday you wake up and take a breath. It may not seem like much, but it is enough. Maybe you are living without a purpose. As an older child, your job was to teach and protect. As a younger child, your job was to adore and annoy. You endure people asking you, “How are your parents?” without a care for you. You are now living everyday without a person you thought you would always be with. You are going to school, moving into a new place, maybe even having a baby – all without the jokes, arguments and advice of your sibling. Everyday you live with the shrine.

I congratulate you on surviving the future. Eventually the public will not recognize that your loss is significant. Yet it still will be. As children we did not plan our futures to just include ourselves. Our future always included our brother or sister. Now, you will have to take care of your parents. You will need to create a world in which your sibling has never been a part. I have confidence in you. You will remember, with love, and tell your children how great your brother or sister is. You will live in the future because of all the great and wonderful memories you have. You will live not only for your sibling but also for you.

A NOTE TO THE NEWLY BEREAVED
(and a reminder to the rest of us)
By Sascha

The first months and years after bereavement can be terrifying. It seems as if the pain stays at a monotonous peak; it seems as if one’s mind will be lost at any moment. And although most of us “get better” after the first terror, we usually do not realize that until we look back, years later.

When we think about it, this state of affairs is almost “reasonable”. After such an overwhelmingly traumatic experience, we can fall – as it were – to the end of the world. Coming back from there is bound to be slow beyond our imagination and fraught with reversals. So far, no one has found a method to avoid this painful journey back. But perhaps it will help to know you have already begun to travel. You will find it is a long journey and desperately hard and you may almost want to stay where you are. But you will realize later that the wind of tomorrow is already stretching your sails, and life awaits for you across the sea. If you only knew...

PLEASE ASK
By Barbara Taylor Hudson
Parents of Murdered Children
Cincinnati, Ohio

Someone asked me about you today, and
It’s been so long since anyone has done that.

It felt so good to talk about you…
To share my memories of you…
To simply say your name out loud.
She asked me if I minded talking about
what had happened to you…
or would it be too painful to speak of it.

I told her I think of it every day, and speaking about it helps me to release
the tormented thoughts whirling around in my head.

She said she never realized the pain
would last this long…
and apologized for not asking sooner.

I told her, “Thanks for asking.”
I don’t know if it was curiosity or concern that made her ask,
But I told her, “Please, do it again...sometime soon.”
Carol Welch and some of the St. Louis Chapter were present for the placing of the brick that the National BP/USA purchased in the area near the statue, the Angel of Hope, where we had our closing ceremony at the 2003 Gathering. It says, “Bereaved Parents of USA 2003 Gathering”. This Angel is the model of the angel in THE CHRISTMAS BOX and copies of it are being placed in many places in the country. The National SHARE Office maintains the site at Blanchette Park in St. Charles, Missouri. If you are ever in the area, stop to see the statue and the bricks we and the St. Louis Chapter have there.

**QUESTIONNAIRES**

Francis Palmer, a bereaved parent in the BP/USA Chapter in Annapolis, MD, is working on a book and would welcome parents willing to fill out a short questionnaire. Information and the questionnaire can be found on the web at www.geocities.com/org/question.html.

If you were 8-12 years old when your sibling died and are willing to fill out a form to participate in a study being done of bereaved siblings by a clinical worker and bereaved parent, contact Susan Rabinaw at www.sibgrief.com.

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**THE CORD**

By Terri Apostolakos

Sent to us by Gay Shelby, Prince William Virginia BP/USA Chapter

We are connected,
My child and I, by
An invisible cord
Not seen by the eye.
It’s not like the cord
That connects us ‘til birth.
This cord can’t be seen
By any on Earth.
This cord does its work
Right from the start.
It binds us together
Attached to my heart.
I know that it’s there
Though no one can see
The invisible cord
From my child to me.
The strength of this cord
Is hard to describe.
It can’t be destroyed.
It can’t be denied.
It’s stronger than any cord
Man could create.
It withstands the test,
Can hold any weight.
And though you not here with me,
The cord is still there.
But no one can see.
It pulls at my heart.
I am bruised...I am sore,
But this cord is my lifeline
As never before.
I am thankful that God
Connects us this way
A mother and child.
Death can’t take it away!

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**WALKING THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW**

When a Jewish Child Dies: Mort Schrag, from the TCF in Los Angeles, CA, whom many of you know and remember from workshops at our Gatherings, has sent us a copy of a new book he has written. This is a short and readable book covering both general and Jewish issues relating to the death of a child. It would be helpful for any grieving person and especially for those of the Jewish faith. If you are interested in this book, contact Mort at sabamortla@aol.com.

**GRAM’S SONG**

by Karyn Henley: This book deals with the story of a young boy’s relationship with his Gram and an explanation, after her death, that helps him understand and gives him hope amidst his grief. The book may be ordered from Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Il or by contacting Debbie Lykins at www@tyndale.com.

**RESPONDING TO GRIEF: A COMPLETE RESOURCE GUIDE**

Many of you may know The Rev. Richard B. Gilbert from conferences and from his writings in BEREAVEMENT magazine. He has sent us a copy of this guide which is a very fine listing of books and web sites dealing with grief. This is the 5th Volume, or fourth supplement, and covers entries for the year 2001. Anyone would find it a great source of help. You may receive a copy by contacting him at dick.gilbert@shermanhospital.org. He is at the World Pastoral Care Center and their motto is “Building Bridges – Not Walls”. They are a support center rather than a membership-driven organization offering listings of course, resources, etc. To receive regular mailings and information about this organization, contact Fr. Gilbert at the same e-mail address or at The World Pastoral Care Center, 1030 Summit Street, Suite 338, Elgin, IL 60120.

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**TAKE THE LOVE OUR CHILDREN GAVE US AND PASS IT ON!**

By Darcie D. Sims
From FOOTSTEPS
A STIFF UPPER LIP
CAUSES WRINKLES

By Mary Cleckley
BP/USA Member at Large

The next time someone tells you to “keep a stiff upper lip” tell them I said it causes a wrinkle.

Bereaved parents will say that losing their child has “aged” them. I used to have a baby face. Into my late twenties, I still couldn’t buy alcohol without showing my driver’s license. When I married, I inherited two children from my husband’s first marriage. I used to get a kick out of telling people I had teen-age children and waiting for the flabbergasted protestations to follow.

I was 33 when Nicholas died; I’m 36 as I write this. Lately, when I tell people I have a 20 year old daughter, no one bats an eyelash! Certainly no protestations – not even a “My you must have started young!” More like an “Oh, that’s nice.”

How old do I look anyway? What happened to me in those three years. I have a theory: we don’t get lines in our faces and gray in our hair and stress-related illnesses from the time we spend thinking about our child, crying and freely expressing our hurt, anger and guilt. We get them from the time we spend trying NOT to. Because we feel we cannot or should not break down before co-workers, acquaintances and, many times, even family, we keep that upper lip as stiff as possible and all of our emotions reined in as tightly as possible. Kept up long enough, without any release, our faces take on that pinched look and the gut finally protests with a message of its own.

THIS I CAN SHARE WITH YOU

By Marilyn W. Heavlin

I have not experienced the death of my only child, but some of us have.
I have not experienced a child dying by suicide, but some of us have.
I have not watched my child fight a terminal illness, but some of us have.
None of us would dare say “I know just how you feel”.
Even if our experiences are similar, no two situations are exactly alike.
But I can say
I remember the pain when my child died.
I remember the feelings of insanity.
I remember the feelings of aloneness.
I remember wishing I could die.
I remember wanting to share something with my child, but he wasn’t there.

So, my friend, our experiences have parts in common and parts that are different!
So, why should we listen to each other?
Do we have anything to share?
Do you know what heartbreak feels like?
All of us do.
Do you know the numbness of grief?
All of us do.
Do you know what it’s like to have empty arms?
All of us do.
So, let’s learn what we can of our commonalities.
We loved a child, but our child left too soon.

THIS WE CAN SHARE WITH YOU

SOMEDAY

By Steven L. Channing
Winnipeg MB TCF

Someday, it won’t hurt so bad and I’ll be able to smile again,
Someday, the tears won’t flow quite as freely whenever I think of what might have been,
Someday, the answers to “why” and “what if” won’t be quite as important,
Someday, I’ll be able to use what your death has taught me to help others with their grief,
Someday, I’ll be healed enough to celebrate your life as much as I now dwell on your death,
And someday, maybe tomorrow, I’ll learn to accept the things I cannot change…

But, for today...I think I’ll just be sad.
VALENTINE’S DAY
By Rufina Bush
BP/USA North Texas Chapter

Today is the day, hearts are light
and gay,
filled with love for family and
friends around.
My heart today is heavy with love
for you,
my beloved son.
To hug you, kiss you, would be my
delight
But you are no more in my sight.
A bouquet I carefully arranged:
two red roses for the two brothers
you left behind,
three pink roses for you sisters who
grieve.
From Mom, one white rose with
angels all around;
God’s messengers to take
my love to you.
Carefully I place it in the vase that
sits
proudly on your headstone, inform-
ing all that you
are gone and have been for some
time.
I cry tears of loneliness.
Then I feel my heart break again.
Will this ever end?
Cards for you are so hard to find.
But I found one.
It talked about no one able to fill
your shoes!
Yes, that is true.
Happy Valentine’s Day, my Dear.
I do wish you were here.
Much love always from your Mom.

REFLECTIONS:
BRIGHT TEETH AND LIGHTER GRIEF
By Dennis Klass, Adviser to
BP/USA Board and St.
Louis Chapter of BP/USA

If we can only find the right brand
of stuff, we can solve our problems
in just one washing, brushing,
scrubbing, spoonful or easy applica-
tion, according to the television com-
mercials. Life is full of trouble, the
television tells us. We have ring
around our collars; our whites are
not white and our colors are not
bright. Prince Charming won’t kiss
Sleeping Beauty because she has bad
breath; we have headaches; our na-
sal passages are clogged and, after
a hard day branding cattle all we get
is light beer. But that’s okay because
when we think our trouble is going
to get us down, we learn that it’s
possible to get a good night’s sleep,
killed Johnson grass with no carry-
over, fight germs while still having
bright teeth and spell relief. And all
of our troubles go away before the
next program.

Wouldn’t it be nice if there were a
bereaved person spray? Just spray it
on and everyone will know what to
say to make us feel good. We will
pass places and days that used to
hurt as if nothing were ever wrong.
We will remember the cheery times
and blot out the ugly rings around
the collars of our minds.

Some people think that going
through grief should be an easy,
one-step miracle process. Send back
the label and proof of purchase if
not completely satisfied. If I can buy
a pill that absorbs 47 times more
stomach acid, I should be able to
find a way to grieve that will absorb
50% more of the acid in my heart.

I sincerely wish that losing a dear
one were in the league with getting
light beer after a hard day on the
range. But it is not something we
can get over or make go away. Los-
ing a loved one is a change in our
lives that we must go through. We
cannot cure our grief, go around it or
wish it away. New life, hope and a
profound and deeply satisfying way
of living is on the other side of grief.
But, first, we must go through grief.
We must walk that lonesome valley.

UPCOMING EVENTS
March 26-27: TCF Crawford County
Chapter will hold a regional cofer-
ence at the Days Inn of Meadville,
PA. For information contact Ralph
or Norma McClay at 814-333-9299.

July 9-11: BP/USA 2004 Gathering
at the Clarion Hotel in Charleston,
SC. Contact Dolly Criswell at
BP2004Gathering@aol.com or at
1717 Oak Point Road, Charleston,
SC, Phone: 843-762-4022.

July 30-August 1: TCF National
Conference. For information send a
#10 SASE to TCF 2004 National
Conference, PO Box 33204, Granada
Hills, CA 91194.

By Susan Means, BP/USA
Louisville, KY Chapter

This morning my ten-year old son
said to me, “I wish I weren’t the only
boy in the family.” He is the youngest
and has two sisters. He should have a
13 year old brother too, whom we all
miss terribly. I didn’t inow what to
tell him. The “life isn’t fair” speech is
worn, the “that’s just the way it is”
speech is too harsh for my young son.
He senses all that he’s missing out on
because his older brother died too
soon. Not a day goes by that I don’t
feel that way too.

I hugged my little boy, told him I
loved him and missed his brother
too. After he left me, comforted for
the moment, I wept for him and for
all of us whose lives have been for-
ever changed because our children
died too soon.
BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA
MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

In Loving Memory of Gary Demeco by these persons; Pat Kinney
John & Therese Goodrich
Kay Bell
Mary Bishop
Dennis & Shirley Shaw
Linda Vordonis
Thomas & Patricia Turner
Carl & Renate McDonough
Robert & Kathleen Plum
Audrey A. Gay
James & Pamela Warner
Frank & Valerie Nelson
Mary & Kevin Weckesser
Judith Camillaci
Mr. & Mrs. John W. Lyle
Mrs. Kathleen Ferrari
Ms. Susan M. Allston
Christie Whitney & Rick Wisotzke
Lucy Merlo & Sandy Granata

In Loving Memory of son, Marc by: Mitch & Renee Dudnikov
In Loving Memory of mother, R. Zimmerman by: Mitch & Renee Dudnikov
As a get well thought for Jack Ewart from: Mitch & Renee Dudnikov
In Loving Memory of their children by: BP/USA Huntington Beach, CA Chapter
In Loving Memory of their children by: BP/USA Coeur D’Alene, ID Chapter
In Loving Memory of their children by: BP/USA/ The Compassionate Friends of Maryland
In Loving Memory of their children by: BP/USA St. Louis Chapters – Gathering remainder moneys
In Loving Memory of Debbie Bray by: Dave & Beverly Hurley
In Loving Memory of Dylan Thornton by: Mary Murphy
In Loving Memory of son, David Horn by: Russell & Linda Horn
In Loving Memory of Paula Marie Goodrich by: John & Therese Goodrich
In Loving Memory of son Corey Chase Massa by: Margaret & Jesse Massa
In Loving Memory of Sandy Wofelby: Bill & Florence Wofel
Gift from: Juliet Sanderson

If we missed listing a donation, we apologize. We try to be careful but might make a mistake or the donation may have come in after the newsletter went to press. 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.