



A JOURNEY TOGETHER

NEWSLETTER OF THE BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

VOLUME X NO. 1 Winter 2005
(January, February, March)

THIS CAN BE A CONSTRUCTIVE IF NOT A HAPPY YEAR

By Margaret H. Gerner, St. Louis Chapter of BP/USA

Happy New Year??? “How can it ever be again?” “How will I ever make it through another year of this torment?” When we are hurting and so terribly depressed, it is hard to see any good in our New Year but we must try.

First, we must hold on tightly to the idea that we will not always be this miserable, that we will someday feel good again. This is almost impossible to believe, but even if we don’t believe it, we must tell ourselves over and over again that it is true – because it is! Many parents whose children have died in the past will attest to this. Remember, also, no one can suffer indefinitely as you are suffering now.

Second, we must face the new year with the knowledge that this year offers us a CHOICE – whether we will be on our way to healing this time next year or still be in the pit of intense grief. We must remind ourselves that, if we choose to be on our way to healing by the following year, we must work to get there and that work entails allowing ourselves to go through our grief, to cry, to be angry, to talk about our guilts to do whatever is necessary to move towards healing.

Third, we must look for good in our lives and find reasons to go on and accept the fact that our continued suffering will not bring our child back. Many of us have other children and a spouse for whom we must go on. Most important, we have our own lives that must be lived. Most of us know that our dead children would want us to go on!

No, this coming year may not be a happy one, but it can be a constructive one. Through our grief we can grow and become more understanding, loving, compassionate and aware of the real values in life. Let us not waste this New Year.



If I can, I’ll come again, Mother,
From out my resting place.

Tho’ you’ll not see me, Mother,
I shall look upon your face.

Tho’ I cannot speak a word
I shall harken what you say.

And be often, often with you
When you think I’m far away.

By Alfred Lord Tennyson

“THOSE WE LOVE
ARE WITH THE Lord,,

AND THE LORD HAS
PROMISED TO BE WITH US.,

NOW, IF THEY ARE WITH
HIM

AND HE IS WITH US..

THEY CANNOT BE FAR
AWAY.”

Peter Marshall
Chaplain, US Senate

And if I go, while you’re still here...
know that I live on, vibrating to a
different measure, behind a thin veil
you cannot see through.

You will not see me, so you must
have faith. I wait for the time when
we soar together again, both aware
of each other.

Until then, live your life to its fullest
and, when you need me, just whis-
per my name in your heart. I will be
there.

By Emily Dickinson

BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

A Journey Together is a national newsletter, published quarterly by Bereaved Parents of the USA.

All rights are reserved. However, we welcome other Newsletters reprinting articles. We ask that, when reprinting, you give proper credit to Bereaved Parents of the USA, including the National Address.

Send address changes, other materials or a request for a Newsletter to
Betty R. Ewart, Editor
BP/USA Newsletter
326 Longview Ave.
Lewisburg, WV 24901
Phone/FAX: (304) 645-3048
E-mail:
newsletter@bereavedparentsusa.org

For other information, contact the Bereaved Parents of the USA
PO Box 95
Park Forest, IL 60466
Phone: 708-748-7866
FAX: 708-748-9184

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

WEB SITE

The Board is pleased to announce that BP/USA has a new webmaster, Elise Cronin-Hurley. The Web address is the same. We thank Craig Flanders for his several years of work as our Web Master. As a bereaved father he did the web site in loving memory of his son,

Take a look at the web site and keep up to date with our organization through it. Materials for the web must be approved by the Board. You will find e-mail addresses there if you wish to make suggestions or send material. .



FROM THE EDITOR

Another year will have begun by the time you receive this newsletter. I hope that 2005 will be a better year for those of you who are newly bereaved and a year of continuing good memories for all of you – no matter how many years it has been since your beloved child died.

This year will mark the 17th since our Ruthie died. I mention this because she was 17 when she died and we had been told that this might be a hard year. It is!! We have now been without her as long as we were with her. As you all know, the with years are MUCH better years than the without years. It is interesting to look back, however, and see how far we have come. The Open Letter on page three of this newsletter was especially meaningful to us – Thanks Terre! I am sure reading this will help others too.

Did you see the TV show at Christmas called THE FIVE PERSONS YOU WILL MEET IN HEAVEN? I had mentioned the book earlier. It has much for thought and would make a good discussion topic for a chapter meeting. It should be out on tape in Feb. and both David Hurley and I taped it if you are interested.

Just a reminder to Editors. Please put the author's name and location (chapter, address, e-mail or something like that) with your articles.. This helps us all to get permission to reprint and to give credit to the authors.

Also, be sure that I get a copy of your chapter newsletter. It is always good to be able to print articles and poems by our own BP/USA members. If you have any writings or come across anything that is especially helpful to you, please send those along to me at the address in the column at the left of this one with your permission to copy.

Thanks!

BUT IT HURTS...DIFFERENTLY

By Rabbi Earl Grollman
"Living When a Loved One Has Died"

There is no way to predict how you will feel.

The reactions of grief are not like recipes, with given ingredients, and certain results.

You may cry hysterically or you may remain outwardly controlled, showing little emotion.

You may lash out in anger against your family and friends or you may express your gratitude for their concern and dedication.

You may be calm one moment -in turmoil the next.

Reactions are varied and contradictory.

Grief is universal
At the same time it
Is extremely personal

Heal in your own way.

REMEDY

By Sascha
From WINTERSUN

Memories
will bring you love
from the past
courage in the present
hope for the future.

AN OPEN LETTER FROM A MOTHER TO HER DAUGHTER IN HEAVEN ON HER BIRTHDAY

By Terre Belt
Anne Arundel County Chapter BP/USA
Annapolis, MD

Skyward. Skyward. Nine years of looking for a special star that I can call your very own for just a little while in the wee hours of the morning of August 26th as I commemorate your early morning birth each year. This year marks twenty-six years since that glorious event. I have always wanted to be the first to wish you a Happy Birthday and the year 2004 will be no different. I'll be out looking for that star.

I can't believe I've lived this long. Truthfully, I haven't lived this long, but I think I'm living now. I don't know when my life engine restarted after you died, but it did, almost in spite of me, I think. There is hope. I see that now. Sometimes I can't help but resist it. It's just easier for me – so strong is the force of grief and of my missing you. But I'm beginning to see what I didn't know before – that at some point in my grief journey, it becomes my choice whether to live and how to live. Not every day and certainly not in the early years when I won't apologize for not having had control of anything but, at some point in my grief and life journey, it is my choice. I'm going to try and make some good choices in your memory. I'm going to try to do some "living for two," as I did 25 years ago.

That doesn't mean that life is the same. It will never ever be the same. I'm not even yet sure I will ever be as good. Even after eight years, for me it's too early to tell. But at least I know my life engine is revving much of the time and, for now, I'll take that as progress. As you know, I've relaxed my standards since your death.

Your friends are thinking babies and careers and how you juggle the two. It's a challenge you'll never face, but you are influencing their choices as they sort out their lives. Your friends and mine tell me all the time of how your life and death have made a positive difference in their lives. For that I am sincerely thankful, and there always seem to be the "but I wish" endings for my thoughts.

Your blonde curly hair. Your gorgeous smile. Your contagious giggle. Your outrageous laugh. Your loving ways. Your generous nature. Your gift of sincere friendship. You. I miss you, birthday girl. The best I can do is to send my love and to hope that it reaches you somehow. Happy Birthday, my dear Cortney. I love you. (Hope you get a kiss from Traci, although I wish she were sending her love as I am.)

P.S. Watch out for the love thoughts coming your way – there are so many who still remember you on your birthday.

Editors Note: This was written last year so it is now 10 years for Terre and Cortney would be 26! Time goes on, doesn't it. Although our years and ages may be different, our feelings are the same and well expressed by Terre.

SNOWFLAKES

By Carol Tomaszewski
Anne Arundel Chapter BP/USA
Annapolis, MD

It finally feels like wintertime outside...the air has a chill and there's a chance for snow. My daughter, who is a young adult, is just like a little kid waiting for the snow. She tells me it's her favorite time of the year.

For me, I prefer to bask in the summer sunshine. Since my son died, I often feel like it's a wintertime all year long. I feel chilled to the soul. I want to stay home and snuggle in bed and ignore the rest of the world. I want to eat chicken soup and chili...comfort food for a cold day. I want to grumble and grouch at the world. So I prefer the warmth and sunshine as I hope to get rid of some of that wintertime feeling.

Yesterday my daughter reminded me that every snowflake is unique, even though we can't see the difference. She continued to say that snowflakes are like our grief. Everyone grieves differently and, therefore, our grief is unique. What looks like it's the same to everyone who has not experienced the loss of a child, is really something very special and unique to each one of us. And...sometimes it comes in light flurries or huge drifts, sometimes it lasts for days...or only minutes. Sometimes we're able to plan ahead and other times it takes us by surprise.

Now, when the snow falls, I will be reminded that I am unique, as is my daughter and my son. I may even go outside and let the beauty of the snow fall around me.



PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

By Phyllis Koehl

Death is God carrying us
in one arm while the other
flings aside heaven's door
to welcome us
back to the blazing hearth
of our first home,
while those inside,
having arrived before us
rush to the door
like glad children, shouting,
"They're here! They're here!"

Death has a bad name
on earth but in heaven,
it's a homecoming party
every time the door opens.

God does not forget
those earthbound children,
sad and left behind.

God leaves the party early
to enter into their despair and
to get them ready for their
own parties someday.

Editor's note: This was sent to me by a college friend after she heard me speak about BP/USA. An artist in residence at her elementary school spoke at a PTA meeting and encouraged children and parents to write about their personal experiences with death and this is what she wrote. We thank her for sharing it with us.



YOU NEVER THOUGHT

By Harriet Sanoff Schiff
THE BEREAVED PARENT

"You probably never thought you could live through your child's funeral. What could have been more dreadful? But you did.

Certainly surviving all the grief you felt seemed impossible. Those days and nights of crying, exhaustion and

pain were almost beyond endurance. You were certain at times you would never get past that time in your life. But you did.

There were times you felt great guilt because somehow you had not filled the role of "parent" as society interprets the role. You were unable to save your child and keep it alive. As that cold, clammy feeling would come over you and your back would prickle thinking about what you could have done differently, you were sunk into such a pit of grieving that you never dreamed it would be possible to go on. But you did.

Often, you were beset with anger and a feeling of powerlessness because events that should have been in your control simply were not. You did not think you could overcome these feelings – especially the hopelessness that accompanied them. But you can.

Just when you needed your mate most, you would find he/she could help you least. You expected comfort from someone incapable of comforting. You argued. Sometimes you even hated. You never thought you would rise from the bottom of the well of sorrow. But you can.

You thought never again could you take an interest in the world and retain friendships and attend weddings and happy occasions for other people's children. You were certain you could never live through the trauma. But you will.

There was no doubt in your mind that you never again could enjoy yourself. Never want to travel. Never give parties or attend them. Never have fun. You would only be sorrowful and certainly you would never laugh. Above all, not laugh. But you will.

And, most of all, you were sure it would be impossible for you to function as a whole human being not buffeted by the waves of sorrow that swept over you in the early days of your tragedy. But you will.

You will do that and you will do more."

(This book is a very good "beginning book" for the journey through grief. Many chapters use quotes from it in their newsletters. These quotes are from the BP/USA Chapter in Metropolitan Baltimore, MD and we thank them for it.

DEAR CHILD OF MINE

By Betty Stevens
BP/USA Metropolitan Baltimore

Dear child of mine, who died
before your time

I am grateful for your life.

Though death brought the end of
hopes and dreams

Still I am grateful for your life.

Through you I have known joy
and sorrow, laughter and tears.
Through you my life has been enriched,
compassion heightened
and I am more keenly aware of the
grief of others.

I am grateful for your life.

Now I draw upon my memories of
you-some happy and some sad.

They are priceless, precious
memories that help me bear the
pain. Through them I will learn to
live again.

I am grateful for your life.

I have been blessed by your life
and left with your love. I will
share that love and strive to live to
be a blessing to others. Dear child
of mine, though you died before
your time, you are never far away
from me. I have locked you in my
secret heart of hearts and there I
will love you through eternity.

*I am grateful for your life-dear
child of mine.*

A MOMENT'S PEACE

By Mary Cleckley
BP/USA Member at Large

Mankind has always been attracted to bodies of water, great and small, but never more so as in times of great stress. I know when our son died, as we satisfied our need to be alone, my husband and I found ourselves in Stone Mountain Park many times. We sat by the edge of the lake and watched and listened to the waves as they lapped against the shore and just listening to those waves satisfied some primeval urge.

Later, as the crowds of interested and caring people had thinned, I found myself still having a need to be near water. The lake we lived by had a magnetic attraction for me. I would walk around to the beach time and again to watch and listen to the waves as they lapped. My husband would come over after awhile and get me, only to find me back at the beach again after a short time. It seemed a spiritual place and I felt more at peace there than any other place I could find.

If there is a body of water available to you and if you haven't already discovered the way the presence of water speaks to the heart, I recommend you try it. The soothing balm can bring a moment of peace. When a family is experiencing a time of great stress, a moment of peace is worth trying for.



I WILL BE

By Rob Anderson
Geneva, Illinois

Bereavement Magazine
www.bereavementresources.com

If you think of me as gone forever...
I will be.

If you think of me as sadness and tears...
I will be.

If you think of me as your broken heart...
I will be.

That's not what I want to be, but
I will be.

If you think of me as memories to cherish...
I will be.

If you think of me as laughter and joy...
I will be.

If you think of me as your healing heart...
I will be.

That's what I want to be,

Please let me be.

From MAN'S SEARCH FOR MEANING

By Viktor Frankl

A psychiatrist who emerged from the holocaust with valuable insights.

“We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked throughout the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken away from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.”

“Every prisoner had a moral choice to make – to surrender one's inner self to the Nazis, or to find the meaning in one's life that would give one the strength to go on;”

Editor's Note: This matter of choice seems to be the theme of this Newsletter with many articles speaking of it. This seems like an important matter to consider as we begin another year – and another year without our beloved children, grandchildren and brother or sister.

WHAT ABOUT ME?

By Traci Morlock
St. Louis Chapter BP/USA

Have you ever felt that, as a surviving brother or sister, we are often forgotten? I have felt this way quite often in the last six years. Over time, the feeling becomes less and less.

Our parents' grief is so much different from ours. No more or less hurtful than ours, but different. They lost their child. I hope that, in my lifetime, I never have to know how that feels. I know how painful it was when Sean died. I don't want to know the pain of having a child die.

But, often times, we are the "forgotten mourners". I love my brother very much and miss him just as much. I think that people sometimes forget that we are hurting also. My parents were offenders of that too.

I know they know my sister and I were hurting, but they were so wrapped up in what they were feeling that they didn't have time to worry about what we were feeling. I tried so hard to make my parents well again that I neglected my grief. Pretty much denied it. We really want to make our families "normal" again.

:I have had some awful things said to me over the last six years. Two weeks after Sean died, someone said to me, "Well, you do still have a sister." Well, yes, I do still have a sister, but that still doesn't lessen the pain of my brother's death and my sister can't possibly replace my brother. Probably the worst thing anyone has said to me is "Why aren't you over this? Sean has been dead for six months." Well, it is not something you just "get over."

I have learned a lot of things over the years and if I hadn't been in such a state of shock, maybe I would have

had some good responses. When I think back on it, I wish I had. I have decided that, from what I have learned, I need to educate people and make them understand that siblings and friends have the right to grieve too.

As surviving siblings and friends, we also have to realize that we need to find a new "normal." We also need to know that it's okay to feel all of the things that we feel, be it anger, sadness, guilt or any other emotion..

Just know that you're not crazy or wrong to grieve. Know also that it is all right to think and talk about them when you're ready, not when someone else says or thinks you should be ready. Death and grieving are, unfortunately, a part of life.

The Fourth International TCF Gath-

DON'T FORGET

Don't forget the dates and place of the 2005 Gathering. It will be July 14-17 at The Imperial Palace in Las Vegas, NV. The theme is THE ROAD TO HOPE. More information and registration materials will be out soon and it will be posted on the web site and sent to all chapters. To be sure you receive information, contact Cathy Bender at BP2005Gathering@aol.com or at 4320 W. LaMadre Way, North Las Vegas, NV 89031.

ering will combine with the World Gathering on Bereavement for a conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, on August 18-21, 2005. For more information on this event, visit www.worldgathering.org. Many excellent speakers and workshops will be presented at this combined meeting.



WHEN YOU SEE A BUTTERFLY

By Brytani Russell
Tampa Bay BP/USA Chapter

When you see a butterfly,
Think of me.
When you see a shadow,
Don't be afraid.
When you see a light,
Think of good things.
But, when you see a butterfly,
Think of me.

When you see a cloud,
Don't be afraid to try and grab it.
When you see a raindrop,
Open your mouth,
Let it fall in.

When you feel a hand touch you,
Don't jump away.
When you get all tingly,
Let the feeling last.

When you feel loved,
Cherish it forever.
But, when you see a butterfly,
Think of me.

When you feel like you've lost your way,
Remember I am there to guide you.
When you feel like no one is there,
Make sure you know I am.
When you feel like I am gone forever,
Make sure you feel like I am there.
When you think you've grieved too much,

I know there's always another tear.
But when you see a butterfly,
Think of me.

For you know that I am always with you,
In every way, shape and form.
I am always there to protect you,
Even through dangerous storms.
Know that I am right behind you,
In whatever fate decides to put you through.

For I may be gone,
But I am around
So, when you see a butterfly,
Know I'm always there.

**BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA
MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

John & Therese Goodrich	In loving memory of daughter, Paula Goodrich & A. C. Sontgerath
Pat and Pete Moser	In loving memory of son, Joey
Mary Murphy	In loving memory of son Dylan
Richard & Pamela Emfinger	In loving memory daughter, Melissa Emfinger
Rob, Mary, Mark, and Tommy Harper	In loving memory of daughter & sister, Miranda Harper
Reba Moran	In loving memory of son, Chad Moran
Judy Patterson	A donation
Renee Dudnikov	In loving memory of husband, Mitch Dudnikov
James & Demarius Aman	In loving memory of son, Mark Allan Aman
Bereaved Parents of North Texas, Inc.	In loving memory of children, grandchildren & siblings
BP/USA of Metropolitan Baltimore, MD	In loving memory of their children

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.

JUST FOR A MOMENT

**By Philip Jones
Calgary, Canada**

**Just for a moment
we held in our hands
a gift so precious, so rare.**

**Just for a moment
we beheld with our eyes
her face so lovely, so fair.**

**Just for a moment
her sensitive touch;
just for a moment
her lyrical songs;
just for a moment
she really was here
with us, where she belongs.**

**Just for a moment
we heard with our ears
her laughter thrilling the air.
The echoes are lingering still;
they always will.**

**Now, just for a moment
she lives in our hearts
cherished with tenderest care.**

**For as long as we live,
for as long as we love,
she will always be there.**



We are the parents whose children have died. We are the grandparents who have buried grandchildren. We are the siblings whose brothers and sisters no longer walk with us through life. We come together as Bereaved Parents of the USA to provide a haven where all bereaved families can meet and share our long and arduous grief journeys. We attend monthly gatherings whenever we can and for as long as we believe necessary. We share our fears, confusion, anger, guilt, frustrations, emptiness and feelings of hopelessness so that hope can be found anew. As we accept, support, comfort and encourage each other, we demonstrate to each other that survival is possible. Together we celebrate the lives of our children, share the joys and triumphs as well as the love that will never fade. Together we learn how little it matters where we live, what our color or our affluence is or what faith we uphold as we confront the tragedies of our children's deaths. Together, strengthened by the bonds we forge at our gatherings, we offer what we have learned to each other and to every more recently bereaved family. We are the Bereaved Parents of the USA. We welcome you.

**BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA
CREDO**

**Newsletter Editor
Bereaved Parents of the USA
326 Longview Ave.
Lewisburg, WV 24901**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter or have a new address, please let us know. Thank you.