



A JOURNEY TOGETHER

NEWSLETTER OF THE BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

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(January, February, March)

ANOTHER NEW YEAR

By Jim Hobbs, BP of North Texas
From "Where are all the
Butterflies?"

Quite a few years ago we were well acquainted with a songwriter-musician and my wife and I had a great time going to her concerts. It was a time long before our son Jesse's birth.

Then one winter something happened to the music. There was a change going on that I didn't understand. Everything was fine with me the way it had been. Our songwriter friend wrote and performed a song called "New Beginnings." The lyrics claimed that she was expanding her horizons. I should have felt better for her, but I didn't. To me it was an end to something good, not a beginning.

When Jesse died, I was again forced into changes that I didn't choose. Except that this change was permanent. I have been seeking *new beginnings* ever since. It was so difficult that first couple of years that I couldn't think past the next week or two. Now, after four years, I am able to think and plan farther into the future, but it took time. Lots of time.

As this new year progresses, my hope for you will be that you, too, will be able to look forward to new beginnings and to find happiness again. If anyone deserves a happier future, it would be a bereaved parent or sibling or grandparent.

HAPPY NEW YEAR???

Betty Ewart, Editor
BP/USA Greenbrier Valley, WV

Some of you are probably thinking, "How can I possibly have a happy new year?" The first year or two it is hard to face another year starting without our beloved child, grandchild or sibling. We may have somehow gotten through Christmas and all the festivities that offered but another whole year??

We used to make resolutions – most of which were not kept or only kept for a few weeks. Now our best resolution is just to keep going for another year. A resolution to have a better year if not a happy one is a start. After a few years we begin to look to what we might do with the new year that is offered us. This is a year that our loved one will never know but one we can make a part of her/his life. We often hear that it is not so much what happens to us as what we do about it.

Maybe this is the year to start a volunteer activity in memory of our loved one. Groups who work with abused children or needy children are always looking for someone with some love to give to a child who desperately needs it. How proud your child, grandchild or brother or sister would be to know that you are making another child's life easier in their name. And you will find that it gives you a reason to get up each day and, maybe, even to welcome a New Year.

Look at yourself in the mirror.

Say to yourself, "It is hard to lose a child."

Say to yourself, "It is reasonable to hurt."

Say to yourself, "Healing takes time."

BE GOOD TO YOURSELF.

By Sascha
In AGAIN



Friendship is born at that
Moment when one person says
To another,
"What!!! You too?
I thought I was the only one!"

C. S. Lewis
(After the death of his wife)

Believe that when you are
most unhappy there is some-
thing for you to do in the
world. As long as you can
sweeten another's pain, life is
not in vain.

Helen Keller

**BEREAVED PARENTS OF
THE USA**

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BOARD NOMINATIONS

There are three vacancies to be filled on the Board of Directors for 2006-2007. Nominations may still be made and should be sent to Bev Hurley by email at Bee.hurley@gte.net or by calling her at 813-832-3175.

2006 GATHERING

For up to date information on the Gathering for 2006 in St. Louis, check the website, at www.bpustastl.org or by calling Sharon Krejci at 314-878-0890, SEE YOU IN ST. LOUISIS!!!!



**FROM
THE
EDITOR**

The cold, dreary winter months are especially hard for grievers. We can not get out as much or easily because of weather. The lack of sun causes us to be more depressed. So, what can we do? This is a good time to read those books you have heard about but haven't had time to read. It is also a good time to visit the persons in nursing homes, hospices, hospitals, etc. Often you truly cheer their day by showing them someone still cares about them and you will be helped yourself too as you help them.

We will all look forward to the arrival of spring and new life again. We also can begin to plan to attend the 2006 Gathering where we can meet others who have suffered the same losses as we have and share ways to move forward with them.

As I write this, we are all saddened by the continuing loss of some of our youngest and best in Iraq. We offer our help to their parents as they undertake their sad journey through grief. We are saddened by new personal losses too. Jack and I have lost 3 close friends in the last 2 months. Pat and Pete Moser had their beloved mother and mother-in-law die just before Christmas. We know they would appreciate hearing from you. We also have members whose husbands died this past year or two and the holidays are still a hard time for them also.

To all of you – and to all bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings, the Board of Directors and leaders of BP/USA and all of our chapters and our members offer you our thoughts, prayers, and wishes for a better and happier New Year.

One of my favorite suggestions from Sascha is to take a moment right now to remember your loved ones smile.

**IN THE GLOW OF
FRESHLY FALLEN SNOW**

**Last night, in the glow of
freshly fallen snow,
I felt for the first time in
months**

**A sense of peace. A feeling of
wonder overcame me
and I looked around to see if
you were there.**

**Later, I thought to myself –
Why did I need to look?"**

**I know, as surely as I know
how to breathe,**

that you are with me always.

**You are closer to me now
than ever before**

**and the only difference
is that, instead of opening**

**my eyes to see you,
now I must open my heart.**

**Written by Sandi Goodman
"Love Never Dies"
www.loveneverdies.net**

A SOLITARY JOURNEY

Helen Steiner Rice

Grief is a solitary journey. No one but you knows how great the hurt is. No one but you can know the gaping hole left in your life when someone you know has died. And no one but you can mourn the silence that was once filled with laughter and song. It is the nature of love and of death to touch every person in a totally unique way. Comfort comes from knowing that people have made the same journey. And solace comes from understanding how others have learned to sing again.

HOW CAN I FIND Relief?

From "A time to Mourn, A Time to Dance"

Aid Association for Lutherans, Appleton, WI

Some people see the process of grief and healing as a journey through a gigantic maze. It feels like there may be many ways in, but the way out is well hidden and difficult to reach. There are seven key turns to successfully negotiate the maze of healing.

- 1 Having the experience. This is the entry point.
- 2 Owning the experience as a loss. This means not denying it, pretending it doesn't hurt or minimizing its importance.
- 3 Willingness and readiness to walk the path of healing. The timing of healing is a very individual thing.
- 4 Hurting. There is no quick fix and no path that allows us to avoid the pain. We must face the pain and experience it.
- 5 Expressing and not repressing the hurt! That means finding a support system or a friend who is willing to let us experience and share our feelings. This isn't always easy. Many times our family and friends want to fix it by finding us a shortcut. There are no shortcuts to grief.
- 6 Assessing and re-evaluating ourselves and the situation. It may seem to delay our progress, but it's a necessary part of healing. Early in grief it feels like we'll never survive long enough to find the end of the maze. But then, somewhere down the path, we find ourselves having our first good belly laugh and feeling guilty about it. Later we may find ourselves laughing without even thinking about it or going the whole day without thinking about the pain. That's because we are moving into the final stages of healing and nearing the end of the maze.
- 7 Learning to live with a redefinition of self. This final step requires finding ways to reinvest our emotional energy, rather than having all of our energy stuck in re-experiencing the loss. This takes place slowly over time. Expect successes but also setbacks and readjustments.

There is no straight line of healing from loss. In fact, there are multiple routes, including dead ends and blind spots. There are detours that cause us to change direction often leaving us feeling lost and confused. Some of the potential detours take us through shock, denial and disbelief. Others may draw us into paths of anger, depression and despair. These dangerous detours can make us withdrawn and bitter – even destructive. If we can't find a way to turn around and reconnect with the main path, this detour is a sign of complicated grief-grief that may need special attention.

Ideally, in navigating the maze, we will learn much about ourselves. We'll leave the maze with a new depth of character-a new definition of self that prepares us to move into the future.



BALCONY AND BASEMENT PEOPLE

By Traci Cooley
BP/USA Tampa Bay Chapter

Shortly after my daughter Malena died, I started a home based business to keep busy. During the course of this business venture, I was able to attend the company's annual convention. These conventions are geared toward encouraging and motivating the sales team to sell, sell and sell. There are workshops and motivational speakers, all pushing you into "expanding your business." As I sat through many of these speakers, most of what they said I related to surviving the death of my precious daughter rather than expanding my business.

Three years later, one of the workshops I attended that weekend keeps popping into my head as my grief process extends past what the world finds "comfortable." The workshop was called, "Balcony People and Basement People." I have spent days and weeks applying this to the people I have encountered during my bereavement. I continually seek Balcony people and I avoid those I consider Basement people.

Basement people are people who constantly pull you down or discourage you. Basement people in our grieving process can and do cause us much hurt and distraction. Basement people are the people who do not wish to hear about your child. They do not want to talk about your hurt or actively help you go through the grief process. Basement people are the people who say ugly or uneducated things about your loss such as, "Aren't you over that by now?" Basement people criticize your bereavement or question every method you choose in dealing with your loss. Basement people make everything about them and their feelings, disregarding the fact that it is your child who died. Basement people can cause a lot of hurt (often unintended) to you during your bereavement process.

to you during the bereavement process.

Balcony people are the people who pull you forward and along the road of grief. Balcony people come beside you and cry with you, spend time listening to you talk of your child and tell you stories they remember too. Balcony people encourage you to seek ways to heal and process your loss. They understand that the way you choose to deal with the death of your beloved child may not be their way but it is what is good for you. Balcony people understand when you do not want them around but stand by just in case you change your mind. Balcony people cook or clean for you because you just do not have the energy or they do not comment when the house is a little (or a lot) messier than it used to be. Balcony people understand that you will never be the "old" you and help you to find the "new" you who will emerge through the grief and loss you have sustained.

Take the time to identify the Balcony people and Basement people in your life. Spend most of your time with the Balcony people and try to limit the time with Basement people, if possible. Balcony people pull you up, cheer you on, encourage you and take care of you when you most need it. Basement people pull you down, criticize and find fault in what you do. Balcony people and Basement people – we all have them in our lives. It is our choice of who we allow to be the part of our bereavement process and our lives. I choose my Balcony people.

WE WALKED TOGETHER

We walked together, you and I
A mother and her daughter.
We had hopes and dreams for
tomorrow,
But tomorrow didn't come.
We walked together, you and I,
We talked, we laughed, we loved,

We shared SO many happy times
And for that, I thank the Lord
above.

We walked together, you and I,
But only for a short time.
For all too soon it ended
Leaving pieces of broken heart
behind

And even though I miss you,
More than words can ever say,
I thank God that I got to walk
with you

Every precious moment of every
day...

Love, Mom

In loving memory of Kimberly Ann
Barrett by her mother.
From the Newsletter of the Prince
William VA Chapter of BP

"You can shed tears that she is
gone
Or you can smile because she
has lived .
You can close your eyes and pray
that she will come back
Or you can open your eyes and
see all that she left.
Your heart can be empty because
you can't see her
Or you can be full of the love that
she shared.
You can turn your back on tomor-
row and live yesterday
Or you can be happy for tomorrow
because of yesterday.
You can remember her and only
that she is gone
Or you can cherish her memory
and let it live on.
You can cry and close your mind,
be empty and turn your
back
Or you can do what she would
want: SMILE, OPEN
YOUR EYES , LOVE AND
GO ON.

Submitted to the Newsletter of the
Metropolitan Baltimore BP Chapter
by Gloria Carton.

By Jack Riemer

From the Houston Chronicle
As reprinted in several
Newsletters

On November 18, 1995, Itzhak Perlman, the violinist came on stage to give a performance at Avery Fisher Hall at the Lincoln Canter in New York City. If you have ever been at a Perlman concert, you know that getting on stage is no small achievement for him. He was stricken with polio as a child and so he has braces on both legs and walks with the aid of two crutches.

To see him walk across the stage one step at a time, painfully and slowly, is an unforgettable sight. He walks painfully, yet majestically, until he reaches his chair. Then he sits down, slowly puts his crutches on the floor, undoes the clasps on his legs, tucks one foot back and extends the other foot forward. Then he bends down and picks up the violin, puts it under his chin, nods to the conductor and proceeds to play.

By now, the audience is used to this ritual. They sit quietly while he makes his way across the stage to his chair. They remain reverently silent while he undoes the clasps on his legs. They wait until he is ready to play.

But this time, something went wrong. Just as he finished the first few bars, one of the strings on his violin broke. You could hear it snap – it went off like gunfire across the room. There was no mistaking what that sound means. There was no mistaking what he had to do.

But he didn't. Instead, he waited a moment, closed his eyes and then signaled the conductor to begin again. The orchestra began, and he played from where he had left off! And he played with such purity as

such purity as they had never heard before.

Of course, anyone knows that it is impossible to play a symphonic work with just three strings. I know that, and you know that, but, that night, Itzhak Perlman refused to know that.

People who were there that night thought to themselves, "We figured that he would have to get up, put on the clasps again, pick up the crutches and limp his way off the stage – either to find another violin or else find another string for this one," You could see him modulating, changing, recomposing the piece in his head.

At one point, it sounded like he was de-tuning the strings to get new sounds from them that they had never made before. When he finished, there was an awesome silence in the room. And the people rose and cheered. There was an extraordinary outburst of applause from every corner of the auditorium. We were all on our feet, screaming and cheering, doing everything we could to show how much we appreciated what he had done. He smiled, wiped the sweat from his brow, raised his bow to quiet us, and then he said, not boastfully but in a quiet pensive, reverent tone ... "You know, sometimes it is the artist's task to find out how much music you can still make with what you have left."

What a powerful line that is. It has stayed in my mind ever since I heard it. And who knows? Perhaps that is the way of life. Not just for artists, but for all of us.

So, perhaps our task in the shaky, fast-changing, bewildering world in which we live is to make music, at first with all that we have, and then, when that is no longer possible, to make music with what we have left.

INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY

By William Wordsworth from
"Recollections of Early Childhood"

...It is not now as it hath been of
yore; -

Turn wheresoe'r I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now
can see no more.

The Rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the Rose,
The moon doth with delight
Look 'round her when the heavens
are bare;

Waters on a starry night!
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But, yet I know, where'er I go, that
there hath past away a glory
from the earth...

...What though the radiance which
was so bright
Be now forever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the
hour
Of splendor in the grass, of glory in
the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which, having been, must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic
mind...



The following article is from DEAR PARENTS, a book put out by the Centering Corporation who supply books for our Gatherings and it appeared in GRIEF DIGEST, Vol. 1, Issue 3 both put out by the Centering Corporation who supply books for Gatherings. Marv and his wife, Joy, founded and run the Centering Corporation. GRIEF DIGEST can be reached at www.griefdigest.com.

DEAR PARENTS

By Marv Johnson

Dear Parents,

We share an agony of life – a child's death. My daughter, Linda, age 3, died over 40 years ago and in my memory feelings it was only yesterday.

I have always wanted to be a wisdom person, learning the lessons that come through life's encounters with passages of time. You have heard, "Time will heal your grief." Neat sayings like that really got under my skin 40 years ago. There were others. "It was God's will." "At least she didn't have to suffer long." "I admire how strong you are." Oh how I hated being strong, crying within, holding my screams, taking care of everyone else! I thought this was my task. I would grow to resent the questions, "How is your wife?" No one asked, "How are YOU?" Now, years later, I know that awkward questions and neat sayings are a product of awkward times for relatives and friends. Such good intentions do not penetrate the barriers we build to protect ourselves from ruin during our pain. I hope you receive support that opens the gate of healing rather than well-intentioned babble that misses your heart.

When Linda died, I did what a man did then. I was strong, took care of my family, went back to work. My granite was polished, smooth and strong. For a man, I was three days off, then back to work. I have met other fathers who suffered their grief

grief in a dark, secret place, appearing as if nothing had happened. Fifteen years later, I opened the valve that keep my "Linda grief" so tightly shut within me I discovered it was not the lack of words or understanding from other people that inhibited my grieving. It was unwillingness to risk expressing my own feelings I discovered it is not TIME that heals. The healing was from within me, waiting for release to talk and share my feelings, risk opening myself to another person, to face the truth and that would let me be free to grieve. This was not a good experience nor a bad experience for me. It became a rich experience which enabled me to face life with the confidence that living is rich and meaningful.

My wish for you is that you will find your own time, your own courage to face your grief. When you hear someone say, "Give yourself time", remember time is there for you to grasp – or it will pass you by. When you hear, "Get over your grief", or "Work it through", remember the death of your child is not something to get over or work through. Linda will always be a very special part of me in my memory and feelings. She remains my three-year old. She touched my life for three beautiful years and I cherish her and am delighted for the time we shared. My life has been richer because I had the privilege of being her father. My wish for you, dear parent, is that you will take your grief for your own, knowing you will always cherish your child – in your memory and in your heart.



WHEN A HOUSE IS NOT A HOME

By Mary Cleckley
BP/USA

Have you had trouble feeling at home in your house since your child died? Many people can't face that place and those memories. As a result, they spend the years ahead running. They don't know what they are searching for but for something that will blot out the memories they once valued.

Yet, those memories refuse to go down without a fight and they keep on popping up at the most inopportune moments. Maybe when you're driving, for instance, or trying to carry on a conversation with a new acquaintance with whom you really don't want to share your experience. Some people choose to move, in an effort to leave old memories and pain behind. They haven't yet learned that what you have in your heart and your head, you carry with you no matter where you go. It's like you're crawling and grief is riding a bicycle and it gets there ahead of you. Strange how grief seems to know your destination.

When grief is fresh, you're not going to be happy no matter where you go. Better than running or moving, this is a good time to use your time wisely. Learn how to live with your loss and that includes allowing your house to become your haven again – friendly, familiar and warm, full of memories that one day you will again find comforting. It happened for me and it can happen for you. Soon, I hope.

Soon, I hope!

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

Sascha from WINTERSUN

**BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA
MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

**Mrs. Lee Story
Coeur d'Alene, ID, BP/USA Chapter
Jeffery K. & Amy Hubert
Greenbrier Valley, WV, BP/USA Chapter
Christa L. Eastman
Mary Murphy**

**In loving memory of John Cleckley
In loving memory of their children
In loving memory of their son James Kyle Hubert
In loving memory of their children
A Donation
In loving memory of her son, Dylan Thomas Murphy
Thurman**

**Metropolitan Baltimore, MD, BP/USA Chapter
Phyllis L. Lynch
Renee Dudnikov**

**In loving memory of their children
In loving memory of her son, Lee Lynch
In loving memory of her son, Marc, and in
loving memory of her mother
In loving memory of their daughter, Paula**

John & Therese Goodrich

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.

NATIVE AMERICAN PRAYER

Hold on to what is good even if it is a handful of earth.

Hold on to what you believe even if it is a tree which stands by itself.

Hold on to what you must do even if it is a long way from here.

Hold on to life even when it is easier letting go.

Hold on to my hand even when I have gone away from you.

