



A JOURNEY TOGETHER

NEWSLETTER OF THE BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

VOLUME VI NO. 3, Summer 2001
(July, August, September)

BE GOOD TO YOURSELF THIS SUMMER

Adapted from
THE HOPE LINE

July/August 1996 Newsletter for
the Bereaved, Inc., Syracuse, NY

Whether you are grieving or not, it is wise to get away and “recreate” yourself. When you are grieving, it is even more important to relax and take time to be good to yourself. Grief work takes an amazing amount of physical, emotional and spiritual energy. The following are some random thoughts which we hope you will find helpful.

- Get outside as often as possible, even if only into the backyard. The warmth of the sun, soft breezes against your skin, the scent of grass and flowers and the chirping of birds all fill your senses and help to make you feel better and more alive.
- Read a good book. Light reading helps to take your mind off grief.

- Exercise. Exercise helps to work off anger, frustration and depression. Search out local parks and nature trails – even walk around your own block. Brisk walking, bike riding and swimming are all great ways to reduce tension. Be sure to observe safety rules and, if you can, invite a friend, family members or another grieving person to join you.
- Try to visit places where there is water. Watching water and hearing it lap against the shore is soothing. As the waves recede, try to envision your grief receding; as the waves return, think of them as bringing peace and comfort.
- Spend some time alone. Possibly go for a drive and observe pleasant surroundings – or roll up the windows and yell and scream and vent your anger. Or go somewhere comfortable where you can just sit and reflect.
- Plan a vacation that will be a peaceful, restful time. Don’t try to do too much. Try to take a respite from your grief work, knowing that, undoubtedly, there will be more grief work waiting for you when you return home. Sometimes it’s easier if we can put the grief work aside for a bit and, when we come back to it, we see it in a different light.
- Attend a support group meeting. Groups keep regular schedules all summer. The newly bereaved will gain helpful ideas on coping. For those who have been bereaved a longer time and who have not attended in awhile, go back to visit your support group and lend a hand to the newly bereaved.

Above all, hold on to HOPE!



REAL LIFE, REAL PAIN, REAL HOPE THE GATHERING

It’s not too late to decide to come to the Gathering in Dallas on July 26-29. There are workshops planned that will be helpful to bereaved parents no matter when your child died or from what causes. There are speeches planned by other bereaved parents, a bookstore where you will find helpful books, a boutique with special gifts, and special sharing sessions. If you are interested, check your last newsletter or look at our web site (www.bereavedparentsusa.org), or contact Shirley Ottman at 940-387-1074 or by e-mail at ro0002@unt.edu for information. The deadline for room reservations at our special rate will have passed by the time you receive this newsletter but contact Shirley to see what arrangements can be made.

BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

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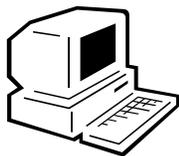
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Our web site is:
<http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org>

BROCHURES

Three more brochures are printed. They are "For Bereaved Grandparents"; "When a Child Dies: What Medical Personnel Can Do"; and "Emergency Personnel: How To Help The Family After The Sudden Illness, Injury Or Death Of A Child". These will be available in Dallas; copies will be sent to chapters later, or you may request copies by writing to the Newsletter Editor at the above address by using the form on page 6. We will have more topics for future publication.



FROM THE EDITOR

Betty R. Ewart

As I am preparing this Newsletter, June 6 has come and the dedication of the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, VA has been broadcast in our area. Nineteen of the 34 from that small town who went off to war were killed on the first day of the Invasion and more later. Two brothers were killed together. Their sister commented that her mother "was never the same." We understand that, don't we?

As they talked about the young men, many only 19 years old, and then talked about the fact that over 400 thousand were killed in the war in Europe and 33 sets of two brothers, I found myself mentally calculating how many parents, grandparents, siblings, and other relatives that must have impacted. I was young at the time and didn't think much about it but now I realize what a hard time it was for so many.

Regularly now I and other Board members hear from newly bereaved persons asking for help. These calls and letters take precedence over everything else we do because that is what we are about – Bereaved Parents. Anything else we do is only to help us to accomplish that important task as well as possible.

Is there someone you know who might welcome a kind word or an understanding call? Could you consider forming a chapter with them and others so that you could meet together and help one another and others? We have brochures now, a newsletter, and a web site. But none of it will help unless we all look for ways to help ourselves and others. We don't have to start with 400,000 people or even 19. Just one person might welcome our understanding and concern.

NEW BOOKS

We were sent three more books this past quarter for review.

"A MOUNTAIN TOO FAR, A Father's Search for Meaning in the Climbing Death of His Son" is by Karl H. Purnell and is his story of his attempt to understand why his son, who died in a fall, loved climbing so much. One of his comments is, "There are so many people lost when a son dies." He finally decides that, "If you really loved the person who is now gone, don't confuse yourself by trying to find out why it happened or who should be blamed." He came to feel that his son is not lost and that death is only another state in the endless cycle of life and says, "When you learn that, you will understand the meaning of what happened." The book is published by New Horizon Press in Far Hills, New Jersey.

"THE SACRED WOUND, Healing From the Death of a Child" is by Lois Gold. Her daughter died in an airplane crash at 16 years of age. Lois is a therapist and searched through many cultures for meaning to the death. None of her therapy study or work had prepared her for her reactions or the grief she felt. She tells us that the book was a means of healing for her. This book is published by Fire Word Publishing, Inc., Portland, Oregon.

"THIS BOOK IS FOR ALL KIDS, BUT ESPECIALLY MY SISTER LIBBY. LIBBY DIED" is a book by Jack Simon, age 5 as told to his mom. It is about his attempt to understand why his sister, Lib, died. It is a short book with great illustrations and would be helpful to any age person. The book and greeting cards with some of the illustrations are available from GSD&M Idea University Press in Austin Texas.



LOOKING FOR MATTHEW

(For Matthew David, 3/24/00 to
4/7/00)

Donna Miles
BP/USA Chapter, Anne Arundel
County, MD

Where were you, little one, when the
earth was bursting with new life?
When the colors and fragrances were
fresh and new? When I longed to
take you outside and let the warm
breeze kiss your cheek?

Where were you little one, when the
days grew long and hot? When we
should have lain under the tree and
looked up in wonder at the swaying
leaves? When I hoped to dip your
toes in this chilly water and hear you
squeal?

Where were you, little one, when the
leaves turned to gold and the wind
could bring color to your cheeks?
When I would have tickled your nose
with a leaf and watched your chubby
fingers grab it?

Where were you, little one, when the
days grew short and the air turned
cold? When the first white flakes be-
gan to fall and I could let you touch
them and laugh with delight?

Where were you, little one, when my
arms were empty and aching for
you?

You were where you have always
been, and will always be, in my
heart.

Love,

Mommy



TEARS

By Maya Cearo
St. Petersburg, FL
Dedicated to my daughter Molly
2/18/96 – 4/5/00

I find them hidden everywhere.
In forgotten places, they are there.

In the laundry where your shirts should be
In the darkness where my eyes can't see,
In the store with popsicles, you won't eat,
In your shoes that no longer hold your feet,
In the scent of the teddy you'll never hold,
On the jacket you wore when it got cold.

I find them and they break my heart
And tear my grieving soul apart.

On the cups that used to touch your lips,
On the tutu that once hugged your hips,
Inside the plastic crayon box
You played with when you had chicken pox.
On the tissues I used on your runny noses,
Out in the garden in the bed of roses.

They fill my lungs till I have to scream.
They fall from my eyes even when I dream.
So I weep, and the worst thing that I fear
Is without you there'll be no end to the tears.

THE TIME WE LIVE IN

By a Columbine High School
Student, Littleton, CO

“The paradox of our time in history
is that we have taller buildings, but
shorter tempers; wider freeways but
narrower viewpoints; we spend
more time, but have less; we buy
more but enjoy it less. We have big-
ger houses and smaller families;
more conveniences, but less time; we
have more degrees, but less sense;
more knowledge, but less judgment;
more experts, but more problems;
more medicine, but less wellness.
We have multiplied our possessions,
but reduced our values. We talk too
much, love too seldom, and hate too
often.

We've learned how to make a living,

but not a life; we've added years to
life, not life to years. We've been all
the way to the moon and back, but
have trouble crossing the street to
meet the neighbor. We've conquered
outer space, but not inner space;
we've cleaned up the air, but pol-
luted the soul; we've split the atom,
but not our prejudice. We have
higher incomes, but lower morals;
we've become long on quantity, but
short on quality. These are the times
of world peace, but domestic war-
fare; more leisure, but less fun; more
kinds of food, but less nutrition.
These are the days of two incomes,
but more divorce; of fancier houses,
but broken homes. It is a time when
there is much in the show window
and nothing in the stockroom; a time
when technology can bring this letter
to you, and a time when you can
choose either to make a difference...
or just hit delete.”

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 6-8, 2001: National Conference of TCF in Arlington, VA; Contact 630-990-0010.

July 26-29 2001: BP/USA Gathering in Dallas, Texas. Information and registration blanks are available on the web: www.bereavedparentsusa.org or by contacting Shirley Ottman, Denton, TX at 940-387-1074 or e-mail at ro0002@unt.edu. Please note a clarification of the room rate: the \$52 is for the room (not per person) with up to four people allowed. Please specify whether you want 2 double beds or a king size bed and we will do our best to accommodate you.

August 30-Sept. 2, 2001: The In Loving Memory Conference : "Illuminating Grief's Darkness" will be held at the Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites, Alexandria, VA. There are many excellent speakers and workshop leaders. Although the conference is advertised for "bereaved parents with no surviving children," anyone could find help there. For information contact In Loving Memory, PO Box 3527, Reston, Virginia 20195. You will also find information and a registration form at www.InLovingMemoryOnline.org

WHEN IS IT OVER?

Have you noticed how often the length of time one will grieve is becoming a topic of discussion in the media lately? People are beginning to get the picture as so many deaths get more media coverage than they used to.

First of all, we read about the death of Adam Petty. After a year his father, Kyle, says that things like the smell of broccoli or a pile of clothes in the middle of a room can knock him to his knees, "bringing on a fresh wave of grief." He also says, "You want to hurt because you feel like, if it hurts, he is still close by."

Then on Memorial Day, in Cincinnati, Ohio, the newspaper carried a front page story of a father who takes his children most Sat. mornings to a florist to buy flowers and then to their mother's grave. Their mother died after childbirth in 1994. He says that they know this is the place to honor their mother and he never wants them to forget her. The outreach coordinator at Fernside Center in Norwood, Ohio says, of this father, "This is the ritual that he's adapted for his family and it works for them. I don't think you can pull out the grief rule book and say grieving should only last a certain amount of time."

At the Oklahoma City Memorial, we still see loved ones remembering their dear ones and saying they will never forget.

TV on D-Day this year showed memorials in France and a dedication in Virginia of a National Memorial. We saw veterans and families from the Second World War who were, over 50 years later, remembering and shedding a tear for lost friends and loved ones.

So, it seems that whether it is one year, 5 years, 7 years or 50 years, it is never "over" and we never forget. So, the next time someone asks you if you aren't over it yet or if you are still grieving, use examples such as these to let them know that you are just like everyone else, it would seem. Many of them will not even ask any more since they have been made aware of all this by the papers, TV, etc.



THE BROWN STAR STORY

Kim Steffgan from
"When Hello Means Goodbye: A Guide For Parents Whose Child Dies Before Birth, At Birth, or Shortly After Birth"

Not long ago, astronauts found in the heavens gaseous celestial bodies - clouds of cosmic dust - which they think have finally answered the mystery of what exists between the small things in the universe, like planets, and the bigger things, like the sun. They call this cosmic dust "brown dwarfs" or "prestars," because, although the brown dwarfs have all the same elements to become a star, for some reason they never did.

All stars go on to live full lives, from their hot, bright white dwarf stage to their aged, cooler and dimmer red giant stage. But "brown stars" only go so far. Instead of being born to live a normal star's life, they remain cool and dim, hiding in the heavens, sprinkled in clusters among the other stars, 150 light years from Earth.

But, like our babies, their role in the universe is very important. In fact, scientists believe they serve as a link between the small things and the big things, holding the universe together; a midpoint between the beginning and the ending of our universal story.

As we grieve our babies who died before reaching the stardom of their earthly lives, perhaps we can find comfort in the possibility that they were designated for this very special, universal role. Energized by our love, they are guardians of our memories of what was and dreams of what some day may be.

As we look to the heavens, seeking answers, we send messages of love to our "brown star" babies.

LABOR DAY

Lisa Beall, BP/USA
Anne Arundel County Chapter
Annapolis, MD

On Monday, September 3, many of us will enjoy a day off work, usually in the company of friends and family, cooking burgers on the grill. It is Labor Day – a day to honor all working people. As parents, our “labor” begins at the birth of our child, an experience you are not likely to forget. But the pain has a wonderful purpose and so we don’t mind too much. Some of us labor in vain to conceive but are blessed with a child through adoption. As our children grow, we labor constantly – giving them the guidance, nourishment and emotional support they need to develop into caring and concerned adults.

But, along the way, our labor increases one hundred-fold. Now we labor in our grief and oh how we labor! Such exertion we have never known before in our lives. The things that came so easily before the death of our children are now so difficult – like reading the newspaper, making dinner, conversing in social groups – it is all just too much effort with too few rewards. And it can stay that way for a long time. Most of your energy is going into absorbing the impact of your child’s death on your life.

Fortunately, most of us reach the point of a new kind of labor. We find new fulfillment in our family, a special cause, work that is important to us, and, many times, in helping other people. We are growing and making something good come of the rest of our lives. It is the choice that we finally feel free to make. So, as you labor, let me assure you that it will become easier and, when you are ready, it will become something that you do for yourself and for your child – a true labor of love!

GRANDPARENTS’ DAY

September 9, 2001

SIDS Survival Guide
By Joani Nelson Horchler & Robin Rice Morris

FORGIVE ME, MY DAUGHTER

I want you to be the little girl
who tore her many-layered petticoats
on the parallel bars or in school,
and once even chipped a tooth.

I want you, too, to be the child with
bloody knees who had matching holes in
her new leotards.

Or maybe the one who fell from a swing
and needed a half dozen stitches
beneath her eye.

Oh, I could hold you then;
there was magic in my kisses that
stemmed the pain and a doctor nearby
for more tangible aid.

But what do I do now, now that you
are a woman, and your sorrows are
commensurate with your age?

I stand immobile as your wan face
leans over the broken turf
where your infant son, your only child,
will soon be interred.

I clench my fists knowing
there is no solace any longer in my
arms for agony of this magnitude.

You are deaf, too, to my murmurings;
you hear only the echoes of his laughter
and his cries.

Of course,
I am here when you need me.

But I can only pretend I am a strong
and wise grandmother when, in truth,
I remain a mother, heart-broken twice.





**BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA
BROCHURE ORDER FORM**

The price of the brochures is \$10.00 for 50. This includes postage and handling. You may order an assortment of titles at the same price. For information, contact president@bereavedparentsusa.org.

Please send:

NUMBER		PRICE
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_____	SUDDEN DEATH	_____
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_____	FOR BEREAVED GRANDPARENTS	_____
_____	WHEN A CHILD DIES; WHAT MEDICAL PERSONNEL CAN CAN DO	_____
_____	EMERGENCY PERSONNEL: HOW TO HELP THE FAMILY AFTER THE SUDDEN ILLNESS, INJURY OR DEATH OF A CHILD	_____
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In loving memory of Kenneth Dwayne Barrentine
In loving memory of their member's children
In loving memory of their son, Marc
In loving memory of Penny Hall Collins
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Paula Goodrich, and Tracy Saulisberry
In loving memory of Amy Elizabeth Taton
In loving memory of Sandy Wolfel

NOTE: This is a report of donations received by the Treasurer by May 31. Any donations received after that date will be reported in the next news letter. If there are any mistakes or other omissions from this list, we are very sorry. Please let us know about those. There is never any charge for the services of BP/USA including the Newsletter. We attempt to keep costs for the Gathering and other publications at a minimum. Contributions finance BP/USA programs and are tax deductible. If you wish to make a contribution, please send it to BP/USA Treasurer, Paul Kinney, P.O. Box 5903, Louisville, KY 40255-0903. Be sure to indicate the exact way you wish this contribution reported in the Newsletter. You will receive notification of the receipt of the contribution. Contributions may be in memory of a child, friend or relative, for a special occasion such as a birthday or anniversary, or for any other reason such as in gratitude for an event or person or to help finance the Gathering or the Newsletter.

AT FIRST

By Sascha
From WINTERSUN

At first
my very name was grief.
My eyes saw only grief,
my thoughts were grief.
And everything I touched
was turned to grief.

But now
I own the light of memories.
My eyes can see you,
and my thoughts can know you
for what you really are;
more than a young life lost,
more than a radiance
gone into night.

Today you have become
a gift beyond my grief,
a treasure to my world –
though you have left
my world and me behind.

FORGIVE ME, MOMMY

By Thomas Herbert, Jr.

Forgive me, Mommy,
for breaking your heart
when all you were trying to do
was help me to a new start.

Forgive me, Mommy,
for all the pain I caused you
and the family, I have to claim;
Mommy, forgive me
for hurting you so.
I love you, Mommy.
Don't ever let me go.

Forgive me, Mommy,
I'll do right,
I promise this the rest of my life.
Please Mommy, I love you so.
FORGIVE ME MOMMY,
DON'T LET ME GO.

Love, your son, Tommy
July 31, 1998

Tommy's mother, Barbara, sent this poem to us. Her son was killed "by a train that didn't stop as he was lying on the tracks." He was 24 years old and died on Nov. 30, 1998. He had written this to her from a half-way house and sent it to her with a red rose. She says she knows, as we all do, that we never forget our children. She is proud of this poem and wants to share it with other families.



I've changed forever,
And so have you.
We're not the same.

Darcie Simms
**FOOTSTEPS THROUGH
THE VALLEY**