



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

## NORTHERN NEVADA CHAPTER

Carson City, NV

January/February 2013

### *Chapter Leader's Message*

Another year is in the past. Unlike our children and siblings who left us too soon. No matter how long it has been, we seem to remember it like it was yesterday. Our children and siblings will never age but will be loved and remembered forever.

It is hope that sustains us through the days of grief, frustration and loneliness. The hope is that someday the deaths of our children and siblings will be eased. In sharing of our grief and emotional hurt we learn from each other.

Hope to see you at our meeting on Tuesday, January 29th at 7:00P.M. Wishing you a better New Year!

*Our children and siblings remembered forever.*

*Delores*

### *The Compassionate Friends Credo*

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.

The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope.

We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace.

But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died.

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love, to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

*We need not walk alone. We are the Compassionate Friends.*

### SPECIAL DATES

#### **January 29<sup>th</sup> Carson City Meeting**

7:00 - 8:30 p.m.  
Carson Tahoe Cancer  
Resource Center  
1535 Medical Parkway

#### **February 26<sup>th</sup> Carson City Meeting**

7:00 - 8:30 p.m.  
Carson Tahoe Cancer  
Resource Center  
1535 Medical Parkway

#### **March 26<sup>th</sup> Carson City Meeting**

7:00 - 8:30 p.m.  
Carson Tahoe Cancer  
Resource Center  
1535 Medical Parkway

#### **April 30<sup>th</sup> Carson City Meeting**

7:00 - 8:30 p.m.  
Carson Tahoe Cancer  
Resource Center  
1535 Medical Parkway

### STEERING COMMITTEE

#### **Chapter Leader**

Delores Sherman

#### **Treasurer/Mailing List/Memorial Page**

Kathy Schultz      kathy@tfc Carsoncity.org

#### **Newsletter Editor**

Georgette Riley      editor@tfc Carsoncity.org

#### **Regional Coordinator**

Gene Caligari

#### **Members**

Betty Kalicki

Jo Saulisberry

Cathy Silva, Delegate

Sonja Strom

*Hawthorne contact:* Petra Wilson

*Fallon contact:* Judy Dunning

#### **The National Office**

PO Box 3696

Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696

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[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

## ***Our Children Loved, Missed & Remembered***

Our dear children, though gone from our sight, are forever loved and will always be remembered. We remember, with compassion, the parents and families of these precious children on the birthdays and anniversary days listed here.

### ***January Birthdays***

Melinda Brown      *Parents: Darryl & Rita Brown  
Grandparents: Barbara &  
Howard Brown*

Brandon Bryant      *Mother: Sunny Bryant*

Chris      *Sister: Camile Strauch*

Steven David      *Mother: Debbie David*

John Luna      *Mother: Pauline Luna*

Kurt Meunch      *Parents: Patrick & Patti  
Williams*

Devon Lane Mondragon      *Father: Dan Mondragon*

Eric Nageotte      *Parents: Ron & Carol Nageotte*

Brandon Painter      *Mother: Mary Painter*

Catherine Ann Pintar      *Mother: Ruth Pintar*

Nicole Michelle Snyder      *Parents: John & Patti Snyder*

Tim Stephens      *Parents: John & Connie Currier  
Grandmother: Amy Hunter*

Tubal pregnancy      *Parents: Rhiannan & Taylor  
Peart*

Mark Vicich      *Mother: Elaine Vicich*

### ***January Anniversaries***

Kelly Barr      *Mother: Linda Barr*

Erin Hackman      *Parents: Rick & Cecilia Hackman*

Jacob Allen Kenton      *Mother: Amy Cote*

Eugene E. Newby      *Parents: Ron & Esther Newby*

Jake Owens      *Mother: Rita Owens  
Sister: Stacie Owens*

Catherine Ann Pintar      *Mother: Ruth Pintar*

April Schultz      *Parents: Norris & Kathy Schultz*

Susanna Celeste LaFleur Siegel      *Mother: Sharon Steele Kientz*

Tim Stephens      *Parents: John & Connie Currier  
Grandmother: Amy Hunter*

Justin Royce Talley      *Parents: Teresa & Larry  
Alexander*

Tubal pregnancy      *Parents: Rhiannan & Taylor  
Peart*

Albert Troy Winkler      *Mother: Nancy Winkler  
Father: Albert Winkler*

Heather Youngblood      *Parents: Donna & Jim  
Schumacher*

### ***February Birthdays***

Bryan Harding      *Mother: Sandra Harding*

Jason Cole Hughes      *Parent: Roberta Moore*

Christopher Dale Northam      *Parents: Teresa & Michael  
Northam*

Jake Owens      *Mother: Rita Owens  
Sister: Stacie Owens*

Jennifer Jo Smith      *Parents: Pam & Carl Smith*

Scott Strom      *Mother: Sonja Strom*

Ricky Woodring      *Parents: Ron & Vickie Woodring*

Shane Woods      *Parents: Jay & Bonnie Woods*

### ***February Anniversaries***

Ian Thomm Campbell      *Father: Donald Campbell*

Kyra Conway      *Grandmother: Norma Conway*

Sabrina Jane Davies      *Mother: Vanessa Walker*

Kelsey Foley      *Parents: Richard & Jody Foley*

Andrea Matlack Hooper      *Parents: David & Barbara  
Neddenriep*

Brad E. Lauderbaugh      *Mother: Myra Lauderbaugh*

Alaina Lester      *Parents: Shawn & Kristine Lester  
Grandmother: Pauline MacKenzie*

John Luna      *Mother: Pauline Luna*

Jeff Martin      *Mother: Suzanne Fox*

Kyle McAfee      *Parents: John & Susan McAfee*

Lana (Lanie) McAlister      *Mother: Leona Wood*

Maddyson Palmer      *Mother: Mandi Palmer*

James Reilly      *Parents: Shane & Pam Reilly*

Danica Marie Silva      *Parents: Dan & Cathy Silva*

Dean M. Stout      *Parents: Millie & Earl Stout*

Paul W. Watkins      *Parents: Nancy & Bob Watkins*

Charles Louis Webb      *Parents: Paul & Eva Webb*

Johnathan Lucas Wendling      *Parents: Michael & Karen Wendling*





**Love Gifts**

Betty Kalicki in memory of her daughter

**Kara**

Cathy Silva in memory of her daughter

**Danica**

Stephanie Snyder in memory of her daughter

**Elise**

Carol & Ron Nageotte in memory of son

**Eric**

Suzanne Fox in memory of her son

**Jeff**

Joyce Wetenkamp in memory of her son

**Corey**

***“... in memory of the children we love,  
miss and remember every day.”***

**Thank You**

*The Northern Nevada - Carson City chapter of The Compassionate Friends is funded solely by contributions. There are no dues or membership fees. A LOVE GIFT is a donation to honor a child who has died, or sometimes as a memorial to a relative or a friend. Your gifts allow us to continue to reach out to other bereaved families through our books, programs, and newsletter. Thanks to each of you for your generous gifts and support.*

**My Special Angel**

Once upon a time I knew this boy with a cute smile and funny little giggle

Who was and still is my son, but only in a different way now

Who is now my special angel and his name is Tim

Who we all lost to cancer 24 years ago

Who I often think of and wonder if he is staying busy keeping up with all the angels and getting his work done and busy watching out for all of us

I often wonder what it would be like to be an angel, some day I'll get to go to a special place and be with my special angel, too

I still miss you each and every day and still wait to hear the phone to say Mom I'll be home. Well, Tim you are home and I'll always miss those phone calls

How time passes us by way too fast and yet way too slow and still wonder where have the past 24 years gone and yet it's hard to realize that you have been gone 24 years already

Well remember you will always be with me and you will always have a special place in my heart and I'll love you always and forever so.

My special and guardian angel!

God Bless!

Love you,  
Mom

*Connie Currier*



## ***What Kind of "New" Year Will it Be?***

Well, since you are reading this, you must have survived those dreaded holidays. Some of you may be holding onto your sanity by the skin of your teeth, but you're here. For now, that's enough. If this is your first or second new year without your child, consider that an emotional victory. I'm sure you wondered several times how you could possibly survive all that family warmth and frivolity without your child. Well, you did.

Now it is a brand new year. It's up to you what you make of it. Do you want to spend the year bitter, angry, withdrawn, and tormented? Or do you want to begin to enjoy life again and start healing? Believe it or not, it IS up to you.

I'm going to assume that you want to begin healing. There are a few things that you must know. It absolutely is NOT disloyal to your child's memory to smile again or enjoy yourself. Would your child wish everlasting pain on you? Would he/she want you to cry every day for the rest of your life?

One of the key elements to softening the pain is to try to think about all the good things that you have instead of what you've lost. I know that seems impossible, but force yourself to try. If you've got family, friends, health, whatever, count your blessings.

Another important element to healing is to be grateful that you had your child at all. I know this seems ludicrous when you feel you've been robbed because you "should" have been able to watch your child grow old. The fact is that you aren't going to do that. Whatever memories you have of your child, or whatever joy you get from having loved him/her, no matter how briefly you had them, is worth hanging on to.

You also need to trust. Look around your next TCF meeting. Do you see the veterans laughing and sharing joyful stories with each other? Do you hear about new babies, weddings, hope, and love? Trust that these parents love their children as much as you love yours. Trust that life can go on again. Even though it sounds impossible, trust us when we say you will find happiness again. No one will try to tell you that you eventually heal to the point where it doesn't hurt at all. No one will tell you that you'll be your old self soon. We realize you have been changed forever by the death of your child. For now, you'll just have to take our word that it does get better and the pain does dull itself a little with time.

It's a brand new year, why not try to make it one of healing and health, occasional smiles, reaching out to others, and remembering the good times? Maybe you can even start looking forward to the future.

As radical as all these concepts may seem to you now, guess what? When you do finally feel that you've made some progress, these will be what you did to get there.

Take it easy on yourself. We're with you.

*Kathy Hahn  
TCF Lower Bucks, PA*

*Reprinted from the January 2001 newsletter of the  
South Lake Tahoe, CA chapter of The Compassionate Friends*

## ***What Might Have Been ... What Is***

I want what might have been...

And I want what is.

I want the child I do not have,

And I want the child that has come after.

I cannot choose

One or the other,

My heart wants both.

What might have been:

A sturdy lad,

Baseball bats,

Football helmets,

Squiggly worms on hooks

Dirt and mud and

Burps and booms.

What is now:

A charming girl,

Raggedy Anne,

Stuffed bears,

Curls and ribbons on hair

Tea and cookies and

Squeals and giggles.

How can I choose

From two blessings,

One gone too soon,

One here by a miracle?

I cannot...

But if I could...

I would want both...

What might have been...

And what is.

*Lisa Sculley*

## ***A Father's Thoughts***

Man really doesn't know the true reason of life - but to love and be loved is a good one.

I have personally experienced losses of my grandmother, grandfather, father, and an identical twin brother. But, the loss of our only child, our son, is the most difficult of all.

Daniel was the light of our lives. A reason for all our hope, love, and expectations of good things to come.

These things have dimmed right now. But it gives us strength to remember what a wonderful son he was in so many different ways.

Dan felt so strongly, deep within himself, that he could not always share and express his feelings to others.

Dan, you meant the world to us, and we'll miss you every day of our lives, until we meet together again in a better place, where there is no pain or death.

*David Triplet  
Media, PA*

## ***For the New Year***

Instead of the old kind of New Year's resolutions we used to make and break, let's make some this year and really try to keep them

1. Try not to imagine the future; take one day at a time.
2. Allow yourself time to cry, both alone and with your loved ones.
3. Don't shut out other family members from your thoughts and feelings. Share these difficult times. You may all become closer for it.
4. Try to be realistic about your expectations of yourself, your spouse, other family members and friends. If each of us is unique and different, how can there be perfect understanding?
5. When a good day comes, relish it. Don't feel guilty and don't be discouraged because it doesn't last. They will come again and multiply.
6. Take care of your health. Even though the mind might not care, a sick body will only compound your troubles. Drink lots of water, take stress-type vitamins, rest (even if you don't sleep), and get moderate exercise. Help your body to heal as well as your mind.
7. Share your feelings with other bereaved parents and let them share with you. You will find that as you begin caring about the pain of others, you will start to come out of your shell - a very healthy sign.

I know that following these resolutions won't be easy, but what has been? It is worth a try. There is nothing to lose and perhaps much to gain.

*Mary Ehmann  
TCF Valley Forge, PA*

## ***Is This Permanent?***

So is this how I am and is this what I am?  
Poor shadow of a laughing self? Will it always be so?

Yes... and no.  
Yes, you will never forget  
And sometimes the pain will well up  
Engulfing you as it does now.  
But not quite as bitter  
Not quite as deep  
Not all the time.  
So... no  
Sometimes you will laugh  
As you remember.  
The pain won't intensify as it does now  
'Till it is almost unbearable...  
It will still be there, but duller

You will laugh again, and with joy  
Joy for the life of your child loved.  
Joy for the life we still have  
Affirming the goodness that was in that child  
Finding positive things from all the negatives  
Learning, giving, loving, living -  
And being thankful that you had that life  
The life that was so much a part of you.  
Being thankful, that, from all the pain  
There were huge truths learnt  
Hard though it was to learn them.  
And in the hurting, hopeless, desperate moments  
Glad of the glimpses of something more -  
Though not glad of the reasons for finding them.  
Glad of the friends who truly knew  
And walked quietly by our side  
Giving strength with their silences  
Love beyond words.

Yes, you will remember all these things  
And be that silent strength  
For others with their ragged wounds.  
It will not always be like this  
For you are on a journey  
You choose the way:  
Bitter or better  
Through or round  
Positives or negatives  
Love or despair  
Life or limbo  
You choose.  
But however you choose  
You will never forget.

*Carolyn Salter  
TCF Walcha, NSW*

*Reprinted from the January 2003 newsletter of the  
Winnipeg, MB chapter of The Compassionate Friends*

## ***Helping Your Grieving Adolescent***

Parenting teenagers... it's a tough job under the best of circumstances. But when a teenager is grieving as well, four dynamics place additional stress on the situation.

First, grieving families often feel a need to pull together for support. Since adolescence is increasingly a time of breaking away and relying on peer support, these conflicting needs can place parents and teens at odds with one another.

Second, adolescents are keenly aware of parental reactions and, when parents are grieving, often try to protect them from further pain. Most commonly, this takes the form of not talking about it.

Third, simply because they've experienced the death of a loved one, grieving teens tend to feel different from their peers. In an attempt to fit in, they may try to ignore their own grief reactions. Nevertheless, their normal grief reactions seethe beneath the surface, waiting for expression - healthy or unhealthy, at appropriate or inappropriate times.

Fourth, the stress of bereavement adds to the physical and emotional swings already common in adolescence.

So what's a caring parent or caregiver to do? Here are four strategies for helping your adolescent through bereavement.

**1. Provide an environment the adolescent perceives as safe.** Like adults, if they don't feel safe, young people can't do the necessary grief work. They need to know that they can trust themselves as having grief reactions that are normal, their peers and adults to be supportive, and parents to be a dependable safety net. You can help through structure, discipline, and education. Structure and maintaining routines provide adolescents with a subtle, daily sense of continuity and permanence at a time when everything else seems up for grabs. Discipline - reasonable and caring, but consistent and firm - reassures adolescents that someone is in control and will save him or her from serious harm. Education can transform a neutral environment into a healing one for your teen. Make sure the adults in his or her world (school personnel, coaches, bosses, clergy, etc.) know that a death has occurred. Share with them printed materials about normal grief responses and what grieving people need. Use health classes and all-school assemblies to educate peer groups about bereavement. And educate your child about normal reactions to grief so that he knows he is not going crazy and can trust the way his body, mind and emotions are responding. If he pulls back from discussion, provide books or movies that illustrate normal grieving.

**2. Encourage your teen to express what the grief experience is like for him or her.** Recognize and affirm that her experience is likely to be different from everyone else's in the family. Provide "emotional coaching" for your child by modeling appropriate emotional responses to loss. If your teenager is a quiet or private person, encourage other methods of expression. Helpful ways of expressing emotion include playing music or musical instruments, writing (songs, poetry, diaries to the person who died), sports (including martial arts and punching bags), art, and photography.

**3. Facilitate an ongoing connection with the person who died.** Tell stories about the person. Give your adolescent a photo or him or her with the person. Support him in visiting the gravesite if that is meaningful to him. Make sure he has a memento of the person who died - a favorite tool or sports or hobby item, a piece of jewelry, a book, a sweater or robe - by which to stay connected. And make sure you remember (in discussion, in prayer, by way of a small gift) to include the memory of the person who died in your celebration of important events in your child's life, such as graduations, getting a driver's license, participating in his or her first school play or first varsity sporting event.

**4. Encourage your teenager to participate in normal adolescent life as she feels able.** Grieving takes enormous energy, so your child may need to slow down a bit while she works on her grief. However, it's important for her to know that you don't expect her to take on an adult role now that someone important has died. Let her know you love and accept and support her - just as she is now, with all the normal living and loving and learning she has yet to do.

*from the TCF newsletter of Delaware County, DE  
Reprinted from the January 2002 newsletter of the  
South Bay/Los Angeles, CA chapter of The Compassionate Friends*

### ***Who We Are...***

The Compassionate Friends is a self-help organization which offers support to families who have experienced the death of a child. Only a person who has experienced the trauma of losing a child can fully understand the pain and suffering involved.

We gather to listen, to share, and the support each other in the resolution of our grief. You need not walk alone, we are the Compassionate Friends.



## **Tips for Preserving Photos**

Photographs represent memories. For bereaved parents, pictures may well be among the most meaningful of remembrances we have of our children. When the holidays arrive, many of us pull out the pictures so friends and relatives can join us in celebrating the lives of our children and siblings. But will your pictures look the same in another 10 or 20 years? With care they can. Here are a few basic things you can do to help protect and preserve your photos.

**Photo Albums** Replace old albums with ones that specifically state they are acid-free or archival quality. Avoid "magnetic" photo pages. The wax which holds the pictures in place will eventually dry out and make it virtually impossible to remove a picture without destroying it in the process.

**Storage** Avoid storing photos in attics or basements. Temperature, humidity and light are the major causes of photo deterioration. Pick a storage location in your home (usually an interior room or closet on the main floor) that avoids extremes of temperature and humidity and provides low light conditions. Avoid storing or using chemicals (paint, sprays, moth balls) in the same storage area.

**Duplicate** Important pictures (especially Polaroids which fade with time), slides and negatives should be duplicated by a quality film processing service. Store a set in a safety deposit box at the bank. Consider this also for irreplaceable videotapes.

**Identification** Each photograph should have the people, event, date, and location on the back. Place photo face down on a glass surface and write the information on the back using a #2 lead pencil. Do not press hard or you may leave an indentation. Sort photos by the date picture was taken.

**Avoid** using any of the following items, which can damage your pictures: Paper clips, masking tape, rubber cement, Elmer's glue, PVC plastic, string, cellophane tape, ball-point pens, metal staples.

**Inspect** Periodically check all your photos for any signs of deterioration. If you see any deterioration, check with a photographic professional if you are unable to determine the cause and solution. Take steps to correct the situation.

**Acquire** an archival catalog. Check the Internet or your local camera store. Purchase those items you may need. Usually these catalogs provide a wealth of information regarding photo preservation and the products needed to accomplish the task.

*Jim Staniforth*

*TCF Madison Area Chapter, WI*

*Reprinted from the Holiday 1998 We Need Not Walk Alone, the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends*

## **Kenny Caught a Raindrop**

It was only a little thing. A tiny baby hand reaching out to catch a raindrop, and a tiny chuckle of triumph, but it started to melt this Grandma's frozen heart.

Grief is a terrible thing that numbs your mind and your spirit and the white-hot pain that floods your body doesn't even touch your frozen heart. I thought I would never feel love, joy, or happiness. After losing two sons in three years, I had made friends with pain and was prepared to share my life with it.

THEN, KENNY CAUGHT A RAINDROP!

I had brought him out on the porch, only out of habit. How many times had I shared the rain with my own children from this sheltered spot? How many times had I turned off the stove and let dinner wait when a little voice said, "Mom, it's time for the sunset." How many dishes sat on the table for hours while I shared a favorite story book or a bubbly, splashy, giggly bath time? Did I really put all those memories into the graves with my sons?

Do I really want to spend the rest of my life in this painful frozen shell? It's true my children are grown now, but what about their children? In this busy modern world, with moms working as well as dads, it's too selfish of me to go on like this.

Yes, it was only a little thing, but it gave me back my life. I will never forget my lost sons and I will miss them always, but from now on, Grandma will enjoy sunsets, baths, making cookies, and playing games. But best of all, there will be joy the next time Kenny catches a raindrop.

*Margie McNamara*

*TCF Miami, FL*

*Reprinted from the February 1996 newsletter of the South Bay/Los Angeles, CA chapter of The Compassionate Friends*



## ***The Same - But Different***

Have you ever seen that commercial with the little girl and the Ritz Bits crackers? The announcer is trying to get her to say whether Ritz Bits are the same as regular Ritz crackers or different.

The little girl tries various explanations. First she tells him how they're alike. "So they're the same?" he asks. "No, Silly," she answers, "one's little and one's big." "So they're different," he says.

She rolls her eyes. Finally, in frustration, she says, "Don't you get it?"

What is obvious to her - but difficult to explain - is that they're the same, but different.

The shock/disbelief/horror/anger is the same. The pain in the chest is the same. The void is the same. The ache and longing and despair hurt just as much, for just as long.

The difference is nobody believes any of that.

When Nicholas was diagnosed (shortly after birth) with a heart defect, he was given only a short time to live. We wanted to bring him home from the hospital, and we were met with some resistance from family and friends.

Many thought that bringing Nicholas home was a terrible idea. "Oh, my, you'll get attached to him, and it will be much harder on you when he dies," was the common thread of their thoughts on the matter.

I don't know how they thought we had avoided attachment to this point - he was our child, he looked just like our other children, he was our son! (Can you envision a world where people have to be talked into taking their new baby home? "Don't worry, Dear, you'll like him once you get him home and get attached to him.")

People honestly seem to think you can carry a child through pregnancy (to whatever stage the pregnancy ends), and have no feelings toward or about your child or yourselves as parents unless the child is alive and healthy.

When a baby is expected, we are told by everyone, including the media, that the birth of a baby is the most blessed of all life's events, that this new person, who is different from all persons ever born, will change our lives forever.

And yet when this most blessed and unique person dies, everybody acts like it's nothing. "Oh, well, better luck next time." "It's better he died before you got to know him." "You'll have more babies."

These are some of the things that make grieving for an infant

child complicated - different. There is no permission given to even feel bad, because you can't have feelings for someone you didn't know?

Do I wish Nicholas had died at birth instead of living six weeks? Of course not. It simply defies logic to think that any parent would want less time with their child instead of more. People will say that grief over the death of an infant is nothing more than the loss of hopes and dreams for the future. But we also miss that unique individual who was our first-born or second child or only daughter or whatever. Even if I'd had another baby, Nicholas would still be my only child starting kindergarten this year.

He was his own person with his own place in our family.

When we speak of the death of a child, age has no place in the discussion of grief.

Don't you get it? It's the same.

*from an article by Linda Moffatt  
St. Louis, MO*

*Reprinted from the February 1997 newsletter of the  
Central Arkansas Chapter of The Bereaved Parents of the USA*

Because of you,  
I love a little more,  
Because of you, I take time  
to give an extra kiss  
Good-bye.  
Because of you,  
there may be dust  
on the window sill,  
and I don't care.

Because of you, I live today,  
before I worry about  
tomorrow.  
Because of you,  
I don't give up quite as fast.  
Because of you,  
now I can help or  
listen more.  
Because of you,  
today, I am me.

*Reprinted from the December 2003 newsletter  
of the Kansas City, MO/KS chapter of The Compassionate Friends*



## ***The Drummer Won***

You were our precious gift from God  
You were the very best, our prize.  
Our hearts were filled with carefree song.  
We never dreamed we'd lose you as we went along.  
In those wonderful years we laughed out loud,  
We told jokes, we seldom cried.  
We had no idea you had an inner drummer  
Who began rolling on drums inside.  
You looked so perfect to us, our precious gem.  
We were sure we would see you win,  
We did not hear the rumbling of drums begin,  
And we did not see evidence of the pain within.  
You held your head up proudly  
Your eyes twinkled brilliant blue.

How could we see any signs  
Of an inner turmoil within you?  
We'd have done anything to help you.  
We would have paid any price.  
There were no clues that you had started  
Marching as the cadence began to rise.  
We could not hear the message  
The drummer was tapping in your mind.  
It must have been convincing, because  
He took our very best, our prize.  
We dropped our heads to sob and cry  
When we heard what you had done.  
We had no warning you would die.  
The drummer won. Our prize was gone.  
In unison our voices screamed, "Why, why, why?"  
"What happened?" "Who was to blame?"  
"Was it their fault or was it mine?" "If we had  
Tried harder would results still be the same?"  
... If we could only discover what went wrong  
If we could find the reason, we would  
Not lose any other as we go along.  
We cried, "If we had only heard the cadence  
When the drummer came marching in  
We could have stopped you from  
Marching into eternity with him."

Our lives were changed forever  
On that dreadful, horrible day.  
We must go on without you; we will survive.  
We'll find a way... Our hearts ache.  
We are shattered and stagger from the pain.  
We want you back here with us.  
We want to make you whole again.  
Now we look up into the sky and  
We wonder where eternity might be.  
Are you free at last? Are you happy there?  
We hope you know we miss you and still care.  
We will someday pass from this earth.  
We will see you then and understand.  
For now, though, we just miss you.  
We cannot possibly comprehend...  
Sometimes late at night we hear  
The faintest tap, tap, tap.  
Is that the drummer in the sky?

Love always, Mom

*Gladys Gore*

*Reprinted from the February 2005 newsletter of the  
Kansas City, MO/KS chapter of The Compassionate Friends*

### ***Welcome New Members***

We welcome new members to our chapter of The Compassionate Friends. We're sorry you have a need to be with us, but we hope you feel you have found a safe place to share your grief and will return. It often takes a few meetings to feel at ease in a group setting. Please try attending three meetings before deciding if TCF is for you. Each meeting is different and the next one might be the one that really helps.

Meetings are generally held the last Tuesday of every month, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m., at the Carson Tahoe Cancer Resource Center, 1535 Medical Parkway, Carson City, NV.

## ***Comparing a Child's Death to Losing a Leg***

Bereaved parents are sometimes asked to try and explain their responses to the trauma of losing a child, and the depth of the hurt that accompanies the loss. When my 16 year old daughter, Deena, died suddenly and unexpectedly from viral pneumonia, my friends asked the same of me as they made an effort to better understand my feelings. I tried to explain it to them by comparing the loss of Deena to the trauma of losing a leg.

First, there is the extreme shock and pain, and you wonder if you are going to make it through each day.

Then, though you are bedridden and the pain may have eased somewhat, the shock is still there. You have lost a part of you that cannot be replaced. As more time passes, the wound begins to heal. You are now able to get around, but only in a wheelchair, as you are still weak and the shock is slow in leaving.

You continue to improve as the months pass; and now you are able to walk with the aid of crutches, but always aware that part of you is missing. The pain is still there. The wound is healing, but the hurt inside is very real and will never completely go away.

Two or three years pass and you adjust, but in everything you do, the part missing is still very evident. Now, instead of being constant, the pain only happens when you think of what you're missing. You look at yourself and ask, "Why did it happen to me?"

You now have an artificial leg and you walk, but there is always a limp. To other people you may appear normal and most of the time, you may appear normal and most of the time, you act normal - but that part is no longer there. You still have that feeling of emptiness. The hurt is still inside, and though you may look like other people, you know you have lost a part of you that has changed your life.

The wound heals, but the feelings, the hurt, the emptiness will never heal completely. You learn to live in a crippled sort of way; glad for the relief from the constant pain, but sorry that a part of you is gone forever.

*Larry Warren  
TCF Atlanta, GA*

*Reprinted from the March/April 1998 newsletter of the  
Ventura County, CA chapter of The Compassionate Friends*

## ***The Holidays are Behind Us***

It is the New Year. The holidays are behind us. We did with them what we could. Whether they were a time of sorrow, a time of joy, or a combination of each, they are now a part of our memories. In a strange way, as a memory in our hearts and in our minds, our child's place is there amongst all the other memories of the season. There is hurt along with the memory, but also a thankfulness of the memory.

Now we look out on a winter landscape. The earth is cold, the land sharply deafened. Yet underneath the hard crust, the great energy and warmth of our earth is guarding and providing life to all that grows.

We may personally know the coldness and hardness of a grief so fresh that we feel numb; a grief so hurtful that our body feels physically hard; our throats tight from the muscles pulled by tears, shed or unshed; our chests banded tightly by the muscles of a mourning heart.

If we are not now experiencing this, our memories recoiled so easily those early days. Yet, as we live these days, like the earth from which we receive our sustenance, we too, in our searchings, find places of warmth and change and love and growth, deep within.

Let our hearts and minds dwell in these places and be warmed and renewed by them, and let us have the courage and love to share them with our loved ones, to talk about even that first dim shape of new hope, or of new acceptance, or of new understanding, or of new love.

These are the new roots, born of our love of our child, that are forming and stirring within, gathering strength so that our lives, at the right time, can blossom once again and be fruitful in a new and deep way.

*Marie Andrews  
TCF South Maryland*



## ***Precious Valentines Memories***

The lace has grown yellow with age. The edges are tattered and the glue that held the pieces together has long dried up, leaving only a slight stain on the faded red paper. It is much smaller than I remembered. Perhaps time has caused it to shrink. It seems so fragile, resting here in my palm. The words have nearly faded and even the heavy crayon marks have lost their luster over the years. There's a smudge of unknown origin on the back, near where the paper was rubbed dangerously thin by uncounted erasure marks. The name is barely legible, the pencil lines so weak that only the mind can read the letters.

I found it the other day, while doing one of those winter chores: cleaning closets. It's nearly 25 degrees below zero outside and it seemed like a good idea to clear away some of the trappings of a thousand years.

February is a middle-of-winter month and most of us have fewer choices in this month than in any other. For those of us here in the Great North, it is either shovel the walk or clean the closets, and it's warmer in the closet (although not by much!). So, armed with dust rag, trash bag and the radio, I opened the door and slipped in... not really thinking about what I might find. I thought I was just going to clean the closet.

But, that first box sent me spinning. I found things I hadn't even remembered I'd lost! I finally found the holiday gift I bought for my sister last year and then so carefully hid away. I found snow boots and sand pails, a beach towel, three old paperbacks, a pile of magazines (all saved because I wanted to clip something "important"). I found shoelaces for shoes no longer "alive" and several other things that had once been alive.

I found half a chocolate-covered cherry and part of a deck of playing cards. It was quite a treasure box, filled with junk that once had had some meaning to someone, maybe even me.

I sorted through the coats and clothes, painfully aware that "someday" would probably not arrive in my lifetime. The too-short hemline and the too-small waist would not be mine again. I packed those things away, mindless of the hours and the drifting snow outside the windows.

When I found the box of scrapbooks, I sat down—now that the closet had some actual floor space. I touched the bindings, not quite sure I possessed the courage required to open the pages. The phone rang and forced me away from that decision. I left the closet & did not return until now.

That's when I found the old paper Valentine, tucked away between the pages of a life lived long ago. As I held that once sticky, but now only stained, piece of construction paper, I felt connection with other valentines, in other lifetimes. I heard a whisper of another voice: my own mother's exclamation over my offered gift. It blended then with my voice, speaking across the generations of children bringing home paper messages of love. OH! I had forgotten THAT... it had become lost in the pain of memories.

It was a peaceful hour in that closet, listening to the sounds of my life, lived long ago and now remembered through the pages of these scrapbooks. I heard my own laughter and that of my friends, joining the laughter of my own children, seeking the laughter of tomorrow's bearers of paper hearts. Time does pass on. Generations of hearts have been delivered and received. Generations of love have been shared just as generations of hurt have been endured. It felt timeless in the closet ... as if when I opened the door, the giver of this Valentine would still be waiting!

Perhaps that is exactly what is happening, perhaps the engineers of all of our hurts and happiness are still waiting – waiting for us to claim that love and bring their light back into being. There were so many years when I could not bear this exchanging of paper hearts! There were so many years when I counted FIRST what I was missing, never realizing that in the measuring of my losses, I was truly losing what I did have!

The snow has drifted deep across the yard: only the tips of my flamingos' knitcapped, covered heads are visible in the white. But my vision has been cleared somewhat this afternoon by a visit in the closet where I found a memory that no length of time could fade. The lace IS faded, the edges tattered, but the heart always remembers and through the tears, the sounds of love given and received echo back to me.

I shall not waste another moment, living in the sadness that has permeated even my bones. I cannot remain in the closet forever. Just as the snow WILL melt someday, so too shall this pain. And then, it will be spring and this small, paper heart will bloom again, because I will make room for love to grow once more.

So now, this little paper message from both my past and my future sits on my dresser, reminding me each morning to make room for the happy memories as well as the hard ones.

I had "lost" that Valentine from so long ago, but the bearer of that most precious gift of love has NOT been lost to me. Our loved ones DIE, but the love we share between us can NEVER BE DESTROYED. Love continues past all change and becomes the memory trace that guides the human spirit. Love isn't enough, but without it, the world grows cold and frozen, and the sidewalks never get shoveled and the closets never get cleaned, and memories get lost in the confusion of pain not healing.

Go find a Valentine, clean a closet, rummage through a drawer, search for some tangible evidence that, indeed, your love DID LIVE— and what a sweet treat that will be!

*Darcie Sims*

*Reprinted from the February 1997 newsletter of the Kansas City, MO/KS chapter of The Compassionate Friends*



**THE  
COMPASSIONATE  
FRIENDS**  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

The Compassionate Friends of Northern Nevada

### ***But You're Absolutely Normal!***

Grief is a normal reaction to loss, and it shows up in many ways you might not expect. If you've:

- been angry with doctors or nurses for not doing enough;
- been sleeping too much or not enough;
- noticed a change in appetite;
- felt no one understands what you're going through;
- felt friends should call more or call less or leave you alone or invite you along more often;
- bought things you didn't need;
- considered selling everything and moving;
- had headaches, upset stomachs, weakness, lethargy, more aches and pains;
- been unbearable, lonely and depressed;
- been crabby;
- cried for no apparent reason;
- found yourself obsessed with thought of the deceased;
- been forgetful, confused, uncharacteristically absent-minded;
- panicked over little things;
- felt guilty about things you have or haven't done;
- gone to the store every day,
- forgotten why you went somewhere;
- called friends and talked for a long time;
- called friends and wanted to hang up after only a brief conversation;
- not wanted to attend social functions you usually enjoyed;
- found yourself unable to concentrate on written material
- been unable to remember what you just read;

... you're normal. These are common reactions to grief. They take up to two years (or more) to pass completely, but they will pass. You'll never forget the person who has died, but your life will again become normal, even if it is never exactly the same. Take care of yourself. You will heal in time.