The Depths of Grief

We are all bereaved parents or bereaved family members. We live with the pain of loss each day, every day. We are veterans of a most unholy pain, rising each day to begin again the struggle to survive, the fight to make sense of a world that—for us—has become senseless.

Now our ranks have sadly swelled.

On the eleventh day of September many thousands of innocent people perished. The killing was as indiscriminate as it was impersonal; husbands, wives, daughters, sons, brothers and sisters died. Each life lost on that day represents, as we know all too well, a forthcoming struggle of the survivors to go on in a newly painful world that will make little sense.

As the relentless news poured in on that black day, my sorrow grew exponentially. Grief and horror mushroomed—demanding to be expressed. Tears fell as they had not in a number of years. Inside of me, the raw pain of grief blossomed anew. “What’s going on?” I asked myself. “Why this overwhelming reaction? This isn’t the first tragedy you’ve been witness to since the death of your little girl!” My pain seemed disproportionate, yet I continued to feel raw and weepy. I was unable to hinder the tides of emotion that swept over me that day, and all the days that have followed. Eventually I began to realize I was closely relating on two levels to the thousands who—without warning—had lost those most precious to them. The devastation that occurred in New York had happened in the place my heart called home, so on that level this was a personal tragedy. And as a grieving parent, I cringed at the unimaginable agony of those left behind—the weeks, months and years of anguished days and sleepless nights that lay in store for those frantic with fear on this horrendous day. I suspected that each of them was convinced that this was the most devastating day of their lives, and while I would not dispute that, I knew they were innocently unaware of the battles to come—the nightmares that lay in wait in the days and weeks ahead. The tears I could not control were also for the innumerable acts of selflessness seen so many times throughout this horror. People put themselves at risk to help others; the injured lent a willing hand of support to those whose need seemed greater. As I watched this on television I was again so deeply moved. It seems our strongest bonds can be forged during the worst times in our lives. This lesson is one I learned first-hand when my own tragedy struck, and my anguish led me to The Compassionate Friends. There, other grieving parents held out their hands to me, and it was there I found the unwavering support that helped me survive my pain. Now I could only hope each of these survivors would find a safe place to voice their grief. So many have been so cruelly thrust into our world. We are here, hands outstretched, for those who need us.

Sally Migliaccio, Editor, TCFBabylon, N

******************************************************************************************************

BIRTHDAY TABLE: We remembered birthdays in AUGUST for: Mrs. Kerry A. Degeyter; David Folks; Kim Kimble; Eric Lanus. Jennifer “GG” Arnold for JULY. We do encourage both you and your family to come when it is your child’s birthday month, to share your child with all of us. You will receive a special birthday gift in memory of your child. Bring that treasured picture of your child that always makes you smile so we may smile with you.

The cake for the AUGUST birthdays are in memory of David Folks, Jennifer “GG” Arnold and Mrs. Kerry A. Degeyter
A SPECIAL THANKS TO

A Big Thank You to: Patsy Ashton for folding the newsletters, stamping and labeling, and bringing to the post office. Her helpers are Suzanne Cornibe, Linda Lanus, Linda Wilson, Joyce Miller, Linda Provance, Debbie Wershbale and Nancy Kimble. Thank you, ladies, for helping get this newsletters to our members every month!

We do encourage families to come to the meeting when it is your child’s birthday month, to share your child with all of us. We thank Nalani Lynn, mom to Jason Lynn, for making these phone calls for us. We enjoy hearing these wonderful stories and seeing their pictures! Thank you to all who participate!

A Big Thank You to: Patti Goens, aunt to Dennis Wedge, Tina Rome, mom to David Rome, and Jerrie Vicari, mom to Zane, for sending the birthday and anniversary poems to our members. Sometimes our families do not acknowledge those special dates. We in TCF know how important those dates are to us no matter how long our child has been gone from our sight. Thanks to Patti, Tina and Jerrie for remembering our children.

Thank you to: Michael, dad to Jacob, and Charlene Hoffmeister, mom to Tynia, for toting the picture boards of our children to the meetings every month. These picture boards let us see all our children who are dearly loved and missed.

Thanks to: Melva Duhon, mom to Dennis, and Janice Flock, mom to Kevin, for bringing our library books to our meetings. These grief books have helped many on this grief journey.

A Huge Thank You to: Debi Giordano, mom to Nicholas, for facilitating our meetings every month. She brings much comfort to our members and gives “hope” that we will survive the death of our children. She has shared her “wisdom” and how she has incorporated her grief into her life so that we can develop our own coping skills and find a way to go on living without our child. She does this in memory of her son Nicholas and I thank her.

To Our Old Members: We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick. Each meeting we have new parents. Think back—what would it have been like for you if there had not been any “oldies” to welcome you, share your grief and encourage you? It was from them you heard, “Your pain will not always be this bad; it really does get softer.” Thank you to all “old” members who continue to support our chapter.

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

BRICKS: The next time to order bricks will be for the December Worldwide Candle Lighting on December 10, 2017. Please send in your brick order form no later than October 15, 2017.

A dad in our chapter, C-Huey Harrison, took pictures at our last event which was the Butterfly Release. These pictures available to our members to download at NO CHARGE. To view and download the pictures you must go to www.harrisonphotostudio.com, then go to CLIENT PROOFING, then enter the password: april2

Thank you, C-Huey, for taking these pictures for our chapter.

************************************************************************************************************************************************************************************************************************

Please Note the Flyer included for the Walk and Auction on October 29, 2017. Invite your family and friends to this event. The Auction will start as soon as the Walk ends. We need to make this Walk/Auction a huge success!
To all those newly bereaved, who are receiving this newsletter for the first time and to all our Compassionate Friends, we wish you were not eligible to belong to this group, but we want you to know that you and your family have many friends. We, who received love and compassion from others in our time of deep sorrow, now wish to offer the same support and understanding to you. Please know we understand, we care, and we want to help. You are not alone in your grief.

Meetings are held the 2nd Monday of each month at East Jefferson Hospital, 4200 Houma Blvd., 1st floor adjacent to the Hudson St. garage at 7:00 P.M. We are a self-sustaining organization with no funds except what we receive through donations from members and newsletter recipients. Please join with us at a meeting.

Grief support after the death of a child

The Compassionate Friends is a national non-profit, self-help support organization that offers friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. There is no religious affiliation and there are no membership dues or fees.

The secret of TCF's success is simple: As seasoned grievers reach out to the newly bereaved, energy that has been directed inward begins to flow outward and both are helped to heal.

The vision of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.

Newsletter Submissions: TCF Greater New Orleans welcomes all submissions to our newsletter. Send articles, poetry, love messages and scanned photos to: TCF GNO, 4541 Loveland St., Metairie, LA 70006. Or e-mail text and photos to: tcfnola@gmail.com As our chapter is only funded by your donations, we ask for a donation of $15 or more for a dedication for our newsletter. This is tax-deductible. We reserve the right to edit for space and/or content. Deadline for submissions is on the Child Remembered page of the newsletter each month. TCF Chapters may copy articles from this publication provided credit is given to the author and the original source. Errors and Omissions: Please notify me if any of your information is incorrect. Thank you!

BIRTHDAY CAKE: Our child’s birthday is still such an important day to us bereaved parents. In TCF this is where we can celebrate our child’s birthday and remember the love we still have for them no matter how long it has been since they died. Our chapter is now offering you the chance to sponsor the birthday cake for the month of your child’s birthday. You may do so by calling Denise St. Pierre (504) 265-0581 to order the cake through East Jefferson Hospital. The cost for the cake is $40. This way we can all celebrate your child’s birthday.

William Hunton is now our Chapter’s webmaster. He would like to add some updated pictures to our website. If you have any pictures of our events that you would like added to the website please send to whunton@cox.net

Thank you for your continued support of our chapter. And a big thank you to William for being our webmaster in memory of his daughter Chelsea Hunton.
Tears on Their Shoulders

Thank God for friends. Can you imagine your life without your close friends? I have never been one to have a great many friends. I know many people who I care for and love, but there are only a few people that I consider close friends. A true friendship goes far beyond just knowing and caring for someone. A true friend is a person you feel comfortable sharing your deepest feelings with. A true friend is one who does not mind a few of your tears on their shoulder.

Since the death of my daughter, I have had the opportunity to meet and talk with many other bereaved parents. There are far more of us than most people realize—far more than I ever realized until I became one. The grief of losing any loved one is hard to overcome. The grief of losing a child is the hardest to overcome. In fact, I dare say that we never overcome it. We simply learn to deal with it. If we are blessed to know the truths of Jesus, we deal with our grief by leaning on Him, and by trusting that we will see our children again. (For those who do not know Jesus, I have no idea how they ever deal with their grief.)

One of our greatest gifts as bereaved parents is close, understanding friends. Most of us find that developing friendships with other bereaved parents gives us more comfort than any other relationship. Hopefully, our friendship with our spouse will deepen and give us that comfort; but I have found that does not always happen. I am sure there are psychological reasons why bereaved husbands and wives cannot always be as comforting to each other as we wish we could, but I know it is true in many cases. Perhaps it is because we are trying so hard to be strong for each other that we hold back some of our emotions. I suppose every couple is different, depending on their personalities and situations.

The point is, very often we are not as comfortable sharing or expressing our grief with our spouse as we are with a special friend. I would really like to hear other bereaved parents' points of view and opinions about this subject. The point of this writing is the importance of loving friendships. I have talked to so many bereaved parents who state that they just do not have anyone that they feel comfortable talking to about their grief. It is not that they do not have friends and relatives, they just don't have any that they can or will share their feelings with. They feel isolated and alone in their grief, and to me that would be unbearable. That is one of the many reasons that I am so happy to have found The Compassionate Friend's. Through T.C.F., I have met people that I consider true friends—friends that never mind a few tears on their shoulders—friends that I never mind feeling their tears on my shoulder. In my opinion, a good cry with a friend that has gone through the loss of a child—a friend who knows how it feels—is more healing than anything else I can imagine. Thank God for counselors and therapists, but without understanding friends with loving shoulders to cry on, I believe we miss out on deep, healing grief relief.

We miss our children. Our lives are forever changed without them. There is a void in our souls that nothing can fill, and in many ways, we don't want it filled. But we do want relief, and true friends that don't mind our tears on their shoulders are one of our greatest sources of that relief. May the Lord lead you to that special friend, a compassionate friend, with whom you can share your deepest thoughts and feelings, one who will always offer you a shoulder to cry on when you need it. May you offer your shoulder to someone in need as well. There is blessed healing to be found with loving friends who are happy to allow tears on their shoulders.

Dr. Sam Smith, Butterfly Ministry, TCF Tyler, TX
LOVE GIFT DEDICATION IN LOVING MEMORY OF

For the 11th Anniversary of
Cody Martin’s death – September 22nd

My mind knows that you are in
A better place where there is no pain.
You are at peace.
I understand that, I just wish
I could explain it to my heart.

Mom, Dad, Kate, Mamere & Meaux

**************************************************************************************************

DO WHAT IS BEST FOR YOU

When bereaved parents come to our meetings, we tell them “Do what is best for you.” We stress this be- cause the purpose of The Compassionate Friends is to help lighten your burden of grief – not make it heavier.

At our TCF meetings we share our common bond, the death of a child, in many different ways. Some by talking; others by listening. Some may take an active part in a program, others may watch, and some may even leave the room. There are some who cry openly and some who are dry-eyed. We do not judge one another because even in the frame work of our likeness, we are so different. The circumstances and the stage of our grief determines what will or will not help us at a particular time. Sharing may be too difficult for you at one meeting, but you may find it helps at another. There are some who continue to receive help by just listening. A program that helps one parent may have the opposite effect on another. Either way, it’s OK! You soon learn that you are with a group who understands your pain – and cares.

We, as TCF leaders, offer ourselves to you as bereaved parents, not professionals. We do not have any set guidelines, and we do not tell you how to grieve. We will try to help you through your grief by offering you hope, hope that comes from knowing that others have been where you are and survived!

Take from us only that which will help you. Do what is best for you. Adele Shearer, TCF, Augusta, GA

“...a bear wedged in great tightness.”

“In a tape called, ‘To Touch a Grieving Heart’ there is a wonderful little reminder of the Winnie the Pooh story by A.A. Milne. You may recall that Winnie goes to visit Rabbit and eats too much honey. Coming out of Rabbit’s hole, he gets stuck tight—so tight he can’t even sigh. He asks his friends to stay with him, read him a story, and offer words of comfort…..and thus to help ‘a bear wedged in great tightness.’

Notice that Pooh does not ask to be pulled out of the hole, he asks only for company so he is not alone. I think Grief is like being ‘a bear wedged in great tightness.’ And, while we cannot make the grief go away for each other, The Compassionate Friends starts and stops with the core idea that we will be there for each other; that ‘we need not walk alone.’”

Opening remarks of the late Richard Edler’s keynote speech at the 1996 TCF National Conference

“The death of a child is so painful, both emotionally and spiritually, that I truly wondered if my own heart and spirit would ever heal. I soon learned that I could help myself best by helping others.” Barbara Bush

************************************************************************************************************************************************

A SOLITARY JOURNEY

Grief is a solitary journey. Only you know the gaping hole left in your life when someone you love 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. by Helen Steiner Rice

Another Summer

Leaving another summer behind, adding one more bouquet to your stores of remembrance, holding new images summer warm to your mind.

Leaving another summer behind, with old, familiar mementos of long-ago times in the sun. And did you discover once more how grief changes memories to anniversaries?
Happy Happy 52nd Birthday!

Remember when I turned 50 you and your brother said that I was ancient. Well guess Ryan will be ancient in October. Having 2 ancient sons is an accomplishment in my book. Ha Ha Ha.

Well another summer has come and gone. Collin and Cate are back in school, and I can say it is about time. As the summer comes to an end they both are just looking for things to do and that can only lead to trouble. Well thankfully that TROUBLE part did not find us this time. School started peacefully and now the fun starts with homework and extracurricular activities.

Since we usually start with Collin, we will fill in what Cate is doing this time. First, she will be dancing 4 nights a week, Student Council Vice President, Volleyball team member, and hopefully can keep up her A honor roll status. Oh, let’s not forget Safety Patrol. She must take after her father with that one. She is looking forward for this school year to finish so she can apply to Mt. Carmel for the next. She still loves to come over and chill out, but also always likes to bake, complete with the mess and make things for me to display around the house, and are usually wonderful. She gets her artistic talent from you.

Collin had a good summer on the Legion Baseball team and now it is back to football. Oh, I can't wait to see him on the field actually playing this year. 55 is his number and I watch for him all over the sidelines, and when he gets in, which he will often this year. I told him that for his 17th birthday that I will give him keys to Hummer. We will see how that goes. My little man is now in 11th grade and he does not have time to hang with Honey because of his social calendar. I don’t know where he gets it from because you and Ryan were very happy to be at home and doing things near the house. He is like a gypsy where he would stay out every night if he could. You never know where he will end up.

I did get Ryan and Collin to hang my canvases in the stairway and my artwork is hung all over the house making it feel like home. And yes, the Geiger are hanging in the den where everyone can see them. They are different, we will leave it at that.

I was happy to see the summer end so they can get back to school and my daughters are happy since they have me all to themselves now. Shayla finished her medical treatments, it is not easy keeping a wild dog calm for 2 months. Shockey is still Shockey, nuts as ever, but funny and a sweetheart.

Big Boy and family went on vacation this June. Rome brought back a rock from Hawaii to be placed for you.

In closing we all Love and miss you more than yesterday but less than tomorrow.

Hugs and Kisses, Mom, Ryan, Shelly, Collin & Cate
Our Children Remembered

September Birthdays

Mark J. Sidney September 2 Son of Shirley Lundy-Connor
Joshua William McNulty September 4 Son of Pam McNulty
Arthur J. “Jay” LaVie, V September 5 Son of Gail LaVie; Brother of Michelle and Louis
Kyle David Chryssoverges September 5 Son of David and Shelley Chryssoverges
Lily Elaine Shipley September 7 Daughter of Colleen Poster
Carrie Ellen Gore September 8 Daughter of Don and Ann Gore
Dayna Marie Hager September 9 Daughter of Chris & Susie Smits
Jennifer Lynn September 14 Daughter of Mary Ann Piazza; Sister of Jonathan
Taylor Townsend September 14 Son of Lisa Rabito Townsend
Kevin Michael Flock September 15 Son of Janice and Jim Flock
Ryan Plattsmier September 15 Son of Randy Plattsmier
Crystal Normand September 15 Daughter of Patti Simoneaux
Andrew Paul Martinez September 16 Son of Larry and Lenore Martinez
Cara Davis September 17 Daughter of Ray Davis
Jacob Lloyd Hoffmeister September 22 Son of Michael Hoffmeister
C-Huey Harrison IV September 25 Son of C-Huey Harrison
Randall “Randy” Greg September 26 Son of Diane Ardon; Brother of Ryan

September Anniversaries

Gerry Provance September 3 Son of Gerry and Linda Provance; Sister of Deena
Paris Callais Sullivan September 3 Daughter Gwen and Randy Sullivan
Terrance Peter Anderson September 6 Son of Beulah S. Anderson
Joshua Keith Barnhill September 7 Son of Keith & Hope Barnhill
Brady Thomas September 7 Son of Merideth Eldridge
Aaron Stephen Lopp September 7 Son of Sonya Batten
Charlette Marie Simmons September 7 Daughter of Betty LeBlanc; Niece of Cheryl Jones
Gabrielle Paige Watkins September 8 Daughter of Gary S. Watkins
Besse Meryl Mills September 11 Daughter of Melanie Mills
Christopher Drefahl September 13 Son of Joe Drefahl
Bessma Hendawi September 13 Daughter of Diane Hendawi
Holden Poole September 15 Son of Shanti Poole
Andrew Paul Martinez September 16 Son of Larry and Lenore Martinez
William John Smeltz September 18 Son of Janice and Victor Smeltz; Brother of Nicholas
Robert Kymm Hickman September 19 Son of Thomas and Bettie Eugene
Ashley Elizabeth September 19 Niece of Vicki Tosh
Peyton Wilt September 21 Son of Lindsey King and Stephen Constanza
Cody Patrick Martin September 22 Son of Jill & Rob Martin; Brother of Kaitlyn; Grandson of Betty & Charles Boudreaux
Kendrick Ussin September 22 Son of Shawn Herbert
Jacob Lloyd Hoffmeister September 22 Son of Michael Hoffmeister
Matthew Boudreaux September 23 Son of Julie and Ronnie Hemenway
Joseph P. Traina September 24 Son of Cynthia Blache; Brother of Nicole Traina
Melissa Ann Moser September 24 Daughter of Kathy and Joe Moser
C-Huey Harrison IV September 25 Son of C-Huey Harrison
Kayla Quinnisha Ward September 26 Daughter of Mildred Honore
Lamont Jordan Smith September 26 Son of Marta Tuyet-Martin
Gabriela “Gabby” Hebert September 26 Daughter of Rachel and Todd Hebert
Sean A. DiGiovanni September 28 Son of Diane Vitran
Justin Henry September 28 Grandson-in-law of Marsha Bohrer
David Joseph Rome September 29 Son of Tina Rome; Brother of Melissa and Paul

A Newsletter Dedication is a special page dedicated in memory of your child with any favorite poem or writing you submit. A Love Gift is a short one or two sentence message in your child’s memory. You may use the form below for love gifts.

Make checks payable to: The Compassionate Friends. Mail to: Denise St. Pierre, 4541 Loveland St., Metairie, LA 70006 (265-0581)

Your Name _________________________________________ Phone ____________________________
Your Child __________________________________________ Birthday __________________ Date of Death __________
Message______________________________________________________________________________

NOTE: Love Gifts/Dedications to be put in the October newsletter are due September 20th!
Our listeners are willing to listen, understand and share.
504-454-3293 – Melva Duhon, son, 41, suicide
504-456-8248 – Patsy Ashton, son, 24, drug overdose
504-606-3275 – Janell Sisolak, son, 25, murdered
504-875-8836 – Sonya Mazzella, daughter, 4, drowned

The experience of grieving cannot be ordered or categorized, hurried or controlled, pushed aside or ignored indefinitely. It is as inevitable as breathing, as change, as love. It may be postponed, but it will not be denied. —Molly Fumia