



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

WWW.TCFALBANY.ORG

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2023

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER

3rd Tuesday every month at 7:30 pm

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OTHER LOCAL CHAPTERS

Due to the Coronavirus, many chapters have ceased in-person meetings, but may be holding virtual meetings. Please call your local chapter to inquire about meetings.

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UNFORTUNATELY THE SARATOGA
CHAPTER HAS CLOSED ITS DOORS

I KNOW YOU BY HEART

*By Alan Pederson
In Memory of Ashley*

There's time and space between
Where we are and where we've
been.

I grieve for what I cannot have
Or ever hold again.

Just when I think I'm all alone
'cause you're so far away,
It suddenly occurs to me
I see you every day.

You're that hint of inspiration
Urging me to carry on
A boost of needed energy
When all my strength is gone.

You're a single shining ray of hope
When faith is hard to find
And twenty-twenty vision when
Grief has left me blind.

You're a lonely road's companion
When it's hard to find a friend
A much-needed reminder
That good-bye is not the end.

You're calm and reassurance
When I scream for answers why
A gentle voice that whispers
"Daddy, it's okay to cry."

You're part of everything I am
And all I'll ever be
The one who, when I'm at my
worst,
Still sees the best in me.

And though you're just outside my
reach
We are never far apart.
I recognize you everywhere,
Child, I know you by heart.



This newsletter is made possible by donations through love gifts. Love gifts are a way that we can honor our children throughout the year, on their birthday, anniversary of their death or during the holidays. Please consider giving a love gift in memory of your children. Love gifts can be made in any dollar amount and mailed to Debbie Bouchey, 26 Berkshire Drive, East Greenbush, NY 12061.

Newsletter Editor
Needed

I have been the editor of the Albany/Saratoga TCF Newsletter for the past 12 years. I am looking for someone who is willing to take over as editor of our newsletter. I have plenty of articles saved up over the years that can assist you in drafting the newsletter. There are also many sources online that you can get great ideas from. If you are interested, please contact me at DebbieBouchey24@outlook.com

**LOVE GIFT DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER:
March 20, 2023**



LOVE GIFT

Living on in our hearts.

Please consider sending a Love Gift to honor your child and to help support our chapter and newsletter.

PEOPLE THINK

People think we're fine, you know.

They say, "Oh, siblings heal so fast."

But they don't know the empty feelings,
or our longing for the past.

People think we're fine, you know.

"Look, how they've resumed their lives," they say.

But they don't know of our troubled hearts
or the loneliness from day to day.

People think we're fine you know.

"See how they're getting over it?"

they surmise.

But they don't know that we've learned to laugh and smile,
only to complete our broken heart's disguise.

A LESSON IN GRAMMER

If you are like me...

I don't want anybody

To quibble with me about whether my son's birthday is or was

Because

(a) it is,

(b) It was, and

(c) It always will be.

And, as to whether I have or had

two children...

Because

(a) I do,

(b) I did, and

(c) I always will have

- Mary Cleckley,
Atlanta, GA

The Myth of Closure

By Ashley David Prend
Hospice of North Idaho

“When will I begin to feel better?”

“When will I return to normal?”

“When will I achieve some closure?”

grievers often ask. Closure, our culture tells us, will bring about a tidy ending, a sense of completion. Some grievers hope that the desired magical closure will occur after the funeral or memorial service. Others are confident it will come once they have cleaned out their loved one’s room. Or maybe after a special personal ritual. Or perhaps, after the first anniversary comes and goes...

The reason we long for closure, of course, is because we would like to neatly seal away all of this pain. We would like to close all the sad, confused, desperate, angry feelings out of our life. We would like to put all of this behind us...Closure is for business deals. Closure is for real estate transactions. Closure is not for feelings or for people we love. Closure simply does not exist emotionally, not in a pure sense. We cannot close the door on the past, as if it didn’t exist, because, after losing someone dear to us, we never forget that person or the love we shared. And, in some ways, we never entirely get over the loss. We learn to live with the loss, to integrate it into our new identity.

Imagine if we really could end this chapter in our life, even more because the attachment would be severed. And this attachment is vital to us - the memories are treasures to be held close, not closed out. Perhaps it is better to think in terms of healing. Yes, we can find ways to move on and channel our pain into productive activities. Yes, we can even learn to smile again. But let’s not ever think that we’ll close the door completely on what this loss means. For, if we did that we would unwittingly close the door on all the love that we shared. And that would truly be a loss too terrible to bear.

Lovingly lifted from BP/USA
A Journey Together, Winter 2008
www.bereavedparentsusa.org



It’s the Thought that Counts

By Clay Harrison

Often in times of trouble,
we don’t know what to say,
So we choose to say nothing,
and sometimes run away.

When friends are really hurting,
we don’t know what to do,
So we offer weak excuses
or say we’re hurting too.

It really doesn’t matter
what kind of gift we bring;
We only need to be there,
if we don’t bring a thing.

It truly is amazing,
what a hug can do,
When heartache numbs the senses, and
friends depend on you.

There’s comfort just in knowing
that you are not alone,
When tears are overflowing,
and hearts are cold as stone.

It’s the loving prayers of others
that balance our accounts,
For when we measure love,
it’s still the thought that counts.



Lovingly lifted from TCF Greene County
Feb-March 2007 newsletter



Did you know that many Presidents were also bereaved parents.

John Adams lost a son, Charles, 20 years of age while Adams was president.

Thomas Jefferson had 6 children and only 2 lived to maturity. Mary, 26, died while Jefferson was president.

James Monroe had a son die at 2 years of age.

John Quincy Adams had an infant daughter die, a son die while Adams was president and another son die 5 years later.

William Harrison had 6 children who died before he became president.

Zachary Taylor had 2 children who died as infants and 1 who died 3 months after her wedding.

Millard Fillmore's daughter died at 22 years of age.

Franklin Pierce had 2 sons die in infancy, and an 11 year old son die 2 months before Pierce's inauguration. History tells us that Franklin Pierce resigned from the Senate after the death of his first son and Mrs. Pierce collapsed from grief after the death of the second son and secluded herself in the bedroom for nearly 1/2 of her husband's presidency and was referred to as "The Shadow of the White House."

Abraham Lincoln had 2 sons die, one at 4 years of age and one at 11 years of age while Lincoln was president. Another son died at 18 years of age after Lincoln's assassination. Lincoln said, "In this sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all...It comes with bitterest, agony....Perfect relief is not possible except with time...You can not now realize that you will ever feel better...And yet this is a mistake...You are sure to be happy again...To know this which is certainly true, will make you some less miserable now. I have experienced enough to know what I say." His wife was unable to cope after the assassination of her husband and the death of the third son and was never well again.

Rutherford B. Hayes had 3 children die in infancy.

PRESIDENT'S DAY

James Garfield had 2 children die as infants.

Chester Alan Arthur had a son die as an infant.

Grover Cleveland had a daughter die at age 13.

William McKinley had both of his children die, one at 4 months of age and one at 4 years of age. McKinley's wife was so overwhelmed with shock and grief that she became an invalid the rest of her life.

Theodore Roosevelt's son died at 21 years of age.

Calvin Coolidge's son died at age 16 during Coolidge's presidency. Coolidge recorded in his autobiography that, "When he went, the power and glory of the presidency went with him."

Franklin Roosevelt had a son die in infancy.

Dwight Eisenhower's son died at age 3. In 1969, Dwight Eisenhower said of the death of his son, "I do not know how others have felt when facing the same situation, but I have never known such a blow. Today, when I think of it...the keenness of my loss comes back to me as fresh as terrible as it was in that long dark day after Christmas in 1920."

John Kennedy had two sons die, one at 2 days old while Kennedy was president.

George H.W. Bush had a daughter die at 4 years of age.

*-Lovingly lifted from BP/USA
A Journey Together, Winter 2007
www.bereavedparentsusa.org*

COPING

January is a reflective month. Ice ponds reflect the leaden sky, and the heart reflects the emptiness of a frozen spirit. When will we begin to thaw? When will we feel like we're making some progress in this place of icicles and cold sheets, sunless days and long, empty nights? Will we ever be happy again? Will I ever be ME again? January is also the month for making promises, commitments, and resolutions (resolutions are FANCY promises). We begin our new year with high hopes, strong wills, and long lists of things that will be different this year. To celebrate my commitment to a new ME, I bought a jogging suit, expensive shoes, timer, pulse meter and M&M dispenser (you've got to have some motivation). THIS YEAR WILL BE DIFFERENT!

We also spend some time looking back over the road we've traveled, and sometimes we wonder if we have made any progress at all. In the beginning, we misplaced car keys, checkbooks, toothbrushes, relatives, and important stuff like the TV Guide. We had to begin making lists of everything. We simply couldn't remember anything. I couldn't remember my address, social security number, zip code, or my mother-in-law's birthday (I never could remember that). I even started making lists of my lists! I knew I was going to be all right when I first discovered I could remember that I made a list.

You know you're making progress when you can coordinate an entire outfit again. Shoes, belts, ties, purses, event sweaters and jackets often got left, simply because when we were hurting so terribly, we couldn't think about what to wear. Many of us didn't even know that our panty hose were on backwards, or the tie was crooked. If you are wearing matching shoes right now, then you are making progress.

You are making progress when you no longer choke when you say your loved one's name. When you can walk down the cereal aisle in the supermarket and not dissolve into tears, progress is being made. When you can enjoy baking his/her favorite cookies or pie or cake again, you are on your way. When the photographs come back out once more and you can wander through the scrapbooks again, letting the smiles peek through the tears, then hope is returning. When memories, for the most part, bring comfort and warmth instead of emptiness and pain. *January grows shorter.* When you begin to understand that putting away your loved one's things does NOT mean putting him/her out of your life, then your step becomes lighter.

Progress occurs when you completely understand that your loved one DIED, but the love you share between you can never be destroyed. Hope begins to return when you can hear laughter again — and some of that laughter is your own. Recovery is possible once unrealistic hopes for a lost future are given up, grieved for, and moved beyond. Perhaps it is not so much saying goodbye to our loved one as it is saying farewell to the old us and the life we shared. Making progress through grief doesn't mean that you no longer miss your loved one. He/she is part of your life forever, but his/her role in your life changes. Our lifestyle and habits change to reflect a different family landscape.

Now as you look back, it is amazing to see the life fabric—no longer ripped apart with a gaping hole, but mended with tiny stitches, left perhaps a bit lumpy (like lots of us), but patched with time, effort and love. Old threads and new threads have blended together and have been re-woven into a pattern not quite the same as we had originally planned. It is a tapestry of love, given and received, remembered and shared. Life can become good and whole and complete once again, not when we try to fill up the empty spaces left by loved ones no longer within hug's reach, but when we realize that love creates new spaces in the heart and expands the spirit and depends the joy of simply being alive. The renewed energy and love we feel as winter turns into spring becomes the memorial to our loved one...not the grave markers we decorate, not the books we write, not the speeches we give, but the LOVE we share and pass on.

You know you are making progress when all of this begins to make some sense (save this column to read later!). When the shoes match and the car keys are found and the list of lists grows shorter, then you are making progress. Then the laughter can return, and with that magical sound comes the healing of the hurt and the shedding of the Band-Aid because the heart is learning to sing again.

January...the month to check on our progress, to make new commitments and to start jogging.

Darcie Sims

TCF Enid, OK



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TCF's MISSION: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

TCF's VISION: That everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.



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