



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS LEXINGTON—BLUEGRASS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

P. O. Box 647
NICHOLASVILLE, KY 40340

"We need not walk alone "

www.tcfbluegrass.org

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AUGUST 2008

Telephone Friends—sometimes it helps to be able to talk to someone who understands. The following bereaved parents are willing to provide support and comfort:

JIM SIMS: (859) 858-8288 /
(859) 797-2168

SUZIE McDONALD: (859)
576-7680

MONIQUE PODGORSKI:
(859) 381-8256

Note—we encourage our members to write and share their experiences and memories. If you would like to submit original poems or articles to be included in the newsletter, please email them to: rwoloch@insightbb.com and put **SUBMISSION** in the subject line.



CHAPTER CO-LEADERS:

Treasurer and Newsletter Mailings:
Newsletter Editor:
Hospitality:

JIM SIMS & STEPHANIE M.

David & Janie Fields
Rebecca Woloch
Karla S.

• WELCOME •

The Compassionate Friends is a mutual assistance self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents and siblings. The primary purpose is to assist them in the positive resolution of the grief experience upon the death of a child and to support their efforts to achieve physical and emotional health. The secondary purpose is to provide information and education about bereaved parents and siblings. The objective is to help those in their community, including family, friends, employers, and co-workers and professionals, to be supportive.

MEETING INFORMATION

Third Monday of Every Month — 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p. m.
Hospice of the Bluegrass ▪ 2321 Alexandria Drive ▪ Lexington, KY

MEETING FORMAT

6:00 p.m.—Doors Open. This is a good time to visit with old friends and acknowledge new ones. Be sure to check out the library.
6:30 p.m.—Meeting Begins. Please plan to arrive early so the meeting can begin on time.

MEETING TOPICS

AUGUST — Karla S. Topic: "Meet My Child" - bring your child's picture and briefly tell the group a special memory, a funny or sad story, or anything you would like the group to know about your child

STEERING COMMITTEE— meets on the first Monday of each month at 6:30pm at Hospice. All are welcome to attend and participate.

**Bluegrass Chapter of The
Compassionate Friends
Regional Coordinator:**
Karen Cantrell
(502) 320-6438

**The Compassionate
Friends National Office**
▪ P.O. Box 3696 ▪ Oak
Brook, IL 60522 ▪
(877) 969-0010

compassionatefriends.org

WE WELCOME YOU WITH COMPASSION, LOVE, & HOPE

It is always difficult to say "welcome" to people coming to our meetings for the first time because we are so very sorry for the reason they came. For some, the first meeting or two can be rather overwhelming, especially if they are newly bereaved. We hope that anyone feeling that way will return to at least a couple more of our meetings. Everyone is welcome to attend our meetings, regardless of the age at which their child died or the length of time that has passed since that day.

Tammy & David Samples parents of **Justin Ryan Samples** (5/26/08)

Josh Samples brother of **Justin Ryan Samples**

Carmen Covert mother of **Bobby Wayne Covert II** (4/22/08)



National News and Notes

We in The Compassionate Friends have heard many stories from our members about how their grief was handled in the workplace. Some of these stories have been heartwarming and reassuring, depicting employers that provided a caring, understanding environment for employees grieving the death of a child, sibling, or grandchild. Others, however, have reminded us that much progress remains to be made.

Through its Compassionate Employer Recognition (CER) Program, The Compassionate Friends seeks to recognize those caring companies and other organizations whose workplace

policies and practices go above and beyond the norm in providing a caring workplace for employees who have suffered the death of a child, sibling or grandchild.

The Compassionate Friends will begin taking nominations for 2009 on Monday, August 4, 2008. Online nomination, as well as printable 2009 nomination forms, will become available at www.compassionatefriends.org.

Examples of company policies and management practices that would qualify an employer for recognition include, but are not limited to:

- Allowing additional time off without loss of benefits.
- Providing flexible work schedules and assignments.
- Allowing leeway in job performance standards.
- Fostering an environment of mutual support among co-workers.
- Providing professional grief counseling, human resources support, or information regarding self-help bereavement support organizations.
- Other policies and practices that go beyond what is normal in your community

Local News and Notes



This years' **TCF BLUEGRASS YARD SALE** will be held on September 27th from 9am to 2pm at South Elkhorn Christian Church. We ask that you keep this date in mind and start considering what you may have to donate. We encourage your friends and family to pitch in to help. Please contact Suzie McDonald by email at catholic20@msn.com or by phone at 576-7680 with donated items or to help with this event. Remember, proceeds help us reach out to help other families as well as to maintain our current programs.

TCF Bluegrass—Our Children

The Bluegrass Chapter's website includes loving tributes to our children. Pages are created and posted online and linked through the "Our Children" listing. If you would like a web page designed for your child, please contact Rebecca Woloch at rwolochxxx@gmail.com or call 254-3148. This service is free of charge—remit up to three photos and the text and you will be able to proof and edit the page prior to it being posted.

Travis Fryman Memorial Scholarship

Mark your calendars for August 9, 2008 and join in a celebration of Travis Fryman's life. The First Annual Travis Fryman Memorial Scholarship Fundraiser will be held at Legion Park in Paris, Kentucky beginning at 9 a.m. with a tractor show and various musical acts throughout the day beginning at 2 p.m. There will also be food, a dunking booth, corn hole tournament and silent auction. All money raised will go toward the scholarship fund set up in Travis' memory. Admission will be \$5 per person, children 5 and under are free. For more information or if you would like to help call 1-859-948-3539. Additional information on this event is posted online at: www.myspace.com/tfry409memorial (a myspace account is not necessary to view this page).



From our Chapter Leader Jim Sims

The Bluegrass chapter of The Compassionate Friends is a very good chapter. I've reached this conclusion from information I get by talking with other chapter leaders or members and listening to what others relate in meetings & workshops. Naturally, there are a few groups that I envy for some of the things they are able to do and there are some things I want our chapter to start doing. But overall, we're a good group! This has not just magically happened. Since 1980 when the chapter was started, our chapter has been blessed with many dedicated individuals that have been willing to devote considerable, sometimes enormous amounts of time and effort to keeping everything going smoothly.

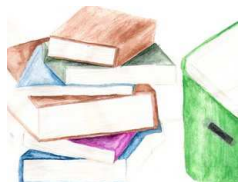
The current "generation" is no exception. A year ago we formed a steering committee in an attempt to share the load of the chapter leaders and to test the old adage that 2 heads are bigger than one. I'm happy to report that this "experiment" has been a rousing success. David & Janie Fields, Karla Scott, Keith LaVey, Brandi & Bruce Koenig accepted the challenge and joined Stephanie and myself in the initial group. Soon thereafter Suzie McDonald volunteered (yes volunteered!) to become a part and Rebecca Woloch was included when she became the newsletter editor. The group has exceeded expectations as we shared our opinions, thoughts and ideas to make joint decisions about chapter activities. Significant accomplishments that have resulted from this cooperative effort include a highly successful yard sale and gas card raffle, new member information packets, the web site makeover, a completely digital newsletter that allows for electronic distribution, cataloging & reorganizing our library, planning and preparation for the candlelight service and family picnic which included Suzie's silent auction. It has required significant dedication of time and effort by everyone and all are deserving of a large gold plated THANK YOU! I hope that many of you will take the time to express your appreciation to them. For very understandable reasons Karla, Keith, Brandi and Bruce have decided not to "re-enlist" for the coming year. I'm extremely appreciative of the contributions they made and am very grateful that they chose to come onboard! An extra special Thanks goes to each of them.

So what have you done for TCF lately? It goes without saying that we're all extremely grateful for TCF being there when we needed all of the things we've gotten from this special group of people. But for that to happen, it requires more than someone opening the door and turning on the light. Yes, we have a good core group (see above) to facilitate meetings, publish the newsletter, plan special events and the other behind the scene things. But we still need more help. You can come to a meeting early and help arrange the room, get the library ready or help put things away after the meeting. You can offer to bring refreshments. You can write a note or call a new member to encourage them to return next month or just let them know you care. Ok, so you can't do those things. Have you un-subscribed to the paper newsletter and sent your email address for the online notification list? Have you read a good book you can recommend for our library or maybe donate it? Do you have a library book that you finished and not returned? Do you check the remembrance list each month and call someone that's about to have or is having one of those "special days"? That's the short list, there's more to do. So here's my challenge – if you've not "given back" to TCF more than what you've gotten, why don't you take a few minutes and think about what you can do. I've offered some suggestions but you may have a better idea. Do it! Maybe you're still very early in your grief and you need to "get" but don't have anything left over to give. That's OK! But you can vow that when you do get better, and you will, you'll then start your own repayment plan.

Ok, that's my challenge. I hope you'll respond in whatever way you can. Just don't blame me when it makes you feel better!!

Jim

Our Newsletter is going green! The TCF Bluegrass Newsletter is moving towards a more environmentally friendly and cost effective delivery. Each month we post our newsletter online at www.tcfbluegrass.org/newsletter.html. If you have internet access PLEASE unsubscribe from the printed edition of our newsletter by emailing a note to Janie at Butterflymom@alltel.net and "cc" the request to Jim at KyWildcat1@alltel.net so that he can add you to the email notification list. The newsletter is posted the first of each month on our website.



LIBRARY BOOKS—Please remember to return all borrowed books. Many books were donated in memory of a child. If you can't come to the meetings to return the books, please call or email Jim or Mary at (859) 858-8288, (859) 797-2168, or TheCamps@adelphia.net. Put **Library Books** in the subject line, and include the book name and author, your name and phone number. Our Library is a great resource for our members, friends and families. Be sure to come to our monthly meetings early enough to browse our selection and borrow a book. Please keep our library in mind and contact Mary with your donations.

AUGUST Birth Dates

8/5/75	<i>Andrew Clive Cloyd</i>	1/19/98	Son of Roxann Devereux & Richard Cloyd
8/6/53	<i>James Richard Dunn</i>	7/11/95	Son of Juanita Allen
8/8/64	<i>Coy Todd Cosby</i>	9/5/83	Son of Shirley and Jess Cosby
8/9/69	<i>Angela M. Meece</i>	1/9/95	Daughter of Claude and Verna Meece
8/11/65	<i>Robin Ricci Kuniff</i>	4/25/93	Daughter of Norma Forston
8/11/84	<i>Louis Tsey Gakpo</i>	12/24/04	Son of Seth & Philomena Gakpo, Paul Gakpo
8/11/67	<i>Christopher Perry Adkins</i>	10/26/97	Son of Linda Brooks
8/13/73	<i>Stacey Carol Sea</i>	1/28/87	Daughter of Darrell and Jean Sea
8/15/78	<i>Jason Randall Johnson</i>	11/2/00	Son of Sundae and Brad Parks
8/15/78	<i>Mathew Scott Coomer</i>	8/31/95	Son of Ray and Bonnie Coomer
8/16/64	<i>David Davis</i>	10/9/93	Son of Curt Davis
8/16/85	<i>Rachel Elaine Sutherland</i>	3/6/04	Daughter of Elly and Alan Sutherland
8/19/82	<i>James Earl "Travis" Fryman</i>	1/26/08	Son of Rickey and Mavis Fryman
8/19/71	<i>Robert Allen "Robbie" Joseph II</i>	12/14/05	Son of Mary Treadway
8/20/83	<i>David James Rison</i>	1/8/00	Son of Karla Scott and David Rison
8/21/72	<i>Allyson Mailfald</i>	11/21/90	Daughter of Bill and Carole Mailfald
8/23/02	<i>Julian Vincent D. Regalado</i>	1/22/05	Son of Ramon & Mary Frances Regalado
8/28/69	<i>Corey Len Tackett</i>	1/22/99	Son of Sallie Jones
8/28/93	<i>"Baby" Potts</i>	8/28/93	Daughter of Jim and Barbara Potts
8/22/88	<i>Michael Terrell John Lee</i>	2/4/08	Son of Vickie L. and Terry C. Lee
8/31/68	<i>William "Bill" Kretzer</i>	4/14/87	Son of Shirley and William Kretzer
8/31/84	<i>Jennifer Lee Toadvine</i>	1/16/04	Daughter of Ted and Cyndi Toadvine

**AUGUST Remembrances**

8/1/99	<i>Lori Em Kotzbauer</i>	(Born) 5/10/74	Daughter of Bob and Connie Kotzbauer
8/4/00	<i>Joseph Carl Richardson</i>	(Born) 11/13/51	Son of Jim and Jean Richardson
8/4/84	<i>David Allen Rose</i>	(Born) 2/6/64	Son of Ralph and Carmileta Rose
8/5/04	<i>Thomas Allan Woodrum "Tommy"</i>	(Born) 6/13/86	Son of Thomas and Mimi Woodrum
8/5/00	<i>William Fredick White</i>	(Born) 12/1/71	Son of Fred and Rebecca White
8/6/92	<i>John Martin Fay</i>	(Born) 3/1/69	Son of Mary Ann Fay
8/9/87	<i>Michael Wallace</i>	(Born) 3/31/61	Son of Jack and Carolyn Wallace
8/14/84	<i>Steven Roberts</i>	(Born) 5/10/65	Son of Elizabeth Roberts
8/15/06	<i>Cynthia "Cyndi" Ellen Crim</i>	(Born) 6/12/80	Daughter of Becky & Keith LaVey & Howard Crim
8/16/95	<i>Todd Jeffries</i>	(Born) 9/3/71	Son of Jim and Terry Jeffries
8/17/95	<i>Shawn Wade Kirby</i>	(Born) 10/29/77	Son of Tommy and Teresa Kirby
8/22/06	<i>Emily Ann Preston</i>	(Born) 5/1/96	Granddaughter of Bud and Gwen Preston
8/27/06	<i>Marcie Reynolds Thomason</i>	(Born) 11/24/80	Daughter of Barbara and Bill Thomason
8/31/95	<i>Taiann Nicole Wilson</i>	(Born) 11/3/79	Daughter of Sue Wilson

Death leaves a heartache no one can heal,
love leaves a memory no one can steal.

~From a headstone in Ireland

What Jesse taught me: AFK by Rebecca Woloch, TCF Bluegrass

Each time I open my Gmail a list of names appears - my friends, my sister, my email contacts. A small circle of color indicates whether they are online at the time – a green dot means they can chat, a red dot means they are busy, an orange dot means they are “AFK” – away from keyboard.

It took me several days after Jesse’s accident to look at his computer – the screen was covered in instant messages sending notes of love and prayer. And there sat Jesse’s status – orange, AFK – not busy, not available, just there.

I am not capable of signing him out, there’s a part of me that needs to see his name each time I sit in front of his beloved internet. It’s the same need that caused me to spend his birthday last March at the tattoo parlor – having his indelible signature stenciled on my left hand where I see it every time I type or do dishes, drive or sign my name.

Most days I feel AFK – not busy but not available either. It’s a state of limbo from which I find distractions through Jesse’s friends, the Dunbar Garden, my other sad moms but that is always tinged

with orange.

Randomly, I’ll pull up Jesse’s “pings” – the instant messages he used to send to me – and I can hear his voice in the type. In those moments I praise the power of technology. I know that I am lucky to have them. They are small gifts to remember him by, to keep him somehow near as time moves further away from the last time I got to kiss him or listen to his ramblings, humming, sighs and diatribes.

I’ve spent a lot of time, as we all do, considering what we should do or not do with our child’s belongings – and while I know I will never be capable of signing Jesse off his Google Talk, I am sometimes bothered by the fact that dust is collecting on all his gadgetry, his clothes, his shoes.

Several months ago I had a conversation with a fellow organ donor mom. She recalled how a friend had suggested she take her son’s leather jacket out of the hall closet and give it to someone who would use it. She struggled with the thought then concluded “Someone may wear that jacket for a season or two but will eventually discard

it. There is no one besides me who will cherish that jacket forever because it was his.” A good friend can’t part with her son’s cell phone – his tone is clear as a bell on the voice mail message. Another Mom still has her sons unlaundered t-shirts two years later.

Here’s what I think: we don’t get to buy things for our kids anymore, we don’t get to exchange worn out shoes for new or surprise them with some silly game or smart al-eck t-shirt. What we have is all we have, we don’t get to make more. Jesse’s things are still his, even if he isn’t here. That may be denial to some, to others it may be just me being selfish. But where my memories are concerned, well, I just am. Selfish. I don’t get to make new memories, so I will hold onto those remnants as tightly as I can.

I will keep Jesse on the internet, where he belongs, where he spent so much of his time. And I won’t apologize for needing to see him there even if his status indicates he is AFK. Most days I am too. <3



TO OUR LONG TIME 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 new parents arrive with a fresh hurt and frightened eyes. I remember how we felt at our first meeting. 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”. They were the ones who wanted to really listen when you talked about your child. Can you be an “oldie” for someone else? By helping someone else, you help yourself and share your child with someone who never got to know them. Come out and share with newly bereaved parents to help them help each other. Our own healing happens when we are reaching out to others.

It's so curious: one can resist tears and 'behave' very well in the hardest hours of grief. But then someone makes you a friendly sign behind a window, or one notices that a flower that was in bud only yesterday has suddenly blossomed, or a letter slips from a drawer... And everything collapses.

~Colette

Jottings from Jo (originally published in the TCF Bluegrass Newsletter of AUGUST 1981)

Another month come and gone. Another page off the calendar. I do hope most of us find that living, though hard, is a bit easier. Jonathan's birthday was July 31, and I worked. There were some rough moments, but I made it. The biggest helps were the feelings that many cared, and the feeling that he was near enough to help ol' Mom with the day. I had grown a pot of marigolds from seed to take to the cemetery for this day. They were a profusion of yellow, gold and orange, (colors of his baseball uniform, his bike, and his skateboard). On the early morning of his day, I was sting in the kitchen and an inchworm crawled across the floor (yes, inside!) toward the marigolds. A song we used to sing bashed its way into my memory and my consciousness.

"Inchworm, inchworm measuring the marigolds
You and your arithmetic
Will certainly go far
Inchworm, inchworm measuring the marigolds
Seems to me
You'd stop to see
How beautiful they are.

I sang it to the children many times because they laughed at the "one and one make two, two and two make four" etc. It seemed rather special on his birthday. We did stop to see how beautiful they are. And I'm glad. I'm sure he would laugh at me feeling an inchworm in the house was a special sign, but he always called me affectionately "My Mom, the village idiot." I took them to the cemetery for him and said a

prayer that if there were things that I was to do for him this day, that I would do them well. I have many great friends who made it better. I am thankful for a tree planted in Israel "in loving memory of Jonathan's eighteenth birthday," and for many cards, two extra special hand delivered, one with a hug and a tear from a very cherished young friend at work, the other at my back door when I awoke and for a pink carnation with a nice visit. All these, plus notes in the mail and phone calls say "I care," and that is what it is all about. I hope that I may share my feelings as well as I am shared with. We do not walk



Vacations

Vacation time is upon us again. You may be having trouble with that very thought. My only advice is to go where it is the most comfortable for you. Large places with many people may not be the answer this year. The family oriented spots may make it more obvious that one of your blessings is missing. It may be that you are locked into plans that were made before the tragedy of your child's death. You may hesitate to change these plans if they involve other people. I personally could only be with people who understood my feelings in the beginning.

If the other people involved are not sensitive and understanding, you may want to reconsider your plans. Good, warm, caring friends who will allow you to be wherever

it is that you are can be a great comfort. Keeping it simple with a backdoor through which you can escape if necessary, can be the best answer. Going away and coming home can be a problem in the beginning; know that it's normal. Whatever it is that you do and wherever it is that you go, I hope you will keep in mind that it won't always be this painful. It will be better; be patient. If you can find any peace and enjoyment, do it. You deserve it and it doesn't mean you don't care.



Mary Cleckly TCF, Atlanta, GA

Helpful websites:

www.griefnet.org
www.goodgriefresources.com
www.thebereavementjourney.com
www.nationalshareoffice.com
www.survivorsofsuicide.com
www.thecompassionatefriends.org
www.griefwatch.com
www.journeyofhearts.org
www.lexinfertility.com
www.bereavedparentsusa.org
www.healingheart.net
www.missfoundation.org
www.growthhouse.org
www.childrenofdome.com
www.spacebetweenbreaths.com

Please let us know if you've found a helpful website you'd like to share.

If I had a single flower for every time I think about you, I could walk forever in my garden. ~Claudia Ghandi

Nourishment for the Bereaved by Michele Anna Jordan

In times of intense emotion it is common to lose one's appetite. The most familiar example is probably the bride, who can become tipsy on a single glass of champagne if no one has urged her to eat a hearty breakfast or lunch. I've seen this happen more times than I can count, and it always surprises me a bit that this little pitfall is not addressed by wedding consultants, bride's maids and official wedding etiquette.

The newly in love also are famous for not eating. Writer M.F.K. Fisher considered good food wasted upon them and did not care to share a table with such a couple. It's the endorphins, so don't waste your time. The newly in love are drunk on their own delicious chemicals and as tipsy as they are, they do seem to have a self-regulating mechanism that leads them to food when they need it. They might trigger envy, but we needn't worry about their well-being.

The results are not necessarily as visible but can be somewhat dire when the loss of appetite descends during a period of loss. And it is very common.

The bereaved don't think about dinner. If you are close to someone who has experienced a loss, one of the best things you can do is to feed them. Don't ask. Don't suggest. Simply make something good and

nourishing and find a moment to put it in the right hand.

"I had no idea I was so hungry," you may hear.

Just because someone doesn't know they are hungry doesn't mean they don't need to eat. The closer the loss is, the longer appetite stays at bay.

One of the most difficult times, I think, is after all the official business is over. In the case of a death, adrenaline takes us through the early stages, the informing of others, the funeral, the burial, the gathering of friends and family.

At some point, we find ourselves alone. This is when the gift of food, homemade soup and bread, cheese and crackers, a stew, a cake can be a source of tremendous comfort.

That period, after the rituals and before acceptance descends, almost like grace, is a hard one and a perfect opportunity for anyone who likes to feed loved ones.

Cultural traditions around the world account for this reality with customs that take care of those in mourning until an official period of time has passed.

In Ethiopia, for example, a family is not allowed to prepare food. In "Death Warmed Over" (Tenspeed Press, 2004), author Lisa Rogak suggests that this custom gives rise to a

requirement that all women visitors come with food or drink in hand. I think there is a deeper wisdom here, too, the foundation upon which the tradition is built. Because sadness eclipses hunger, why not take it out of the family's hands entirely? This is how custom develops, slowly and intuitively, a response to our deepest natures.

Fixed forever in my mind is the image of a friend's mother, holding a bowl of spaghetti I had just made. Curls of steam escape from the aluminum foil covering the bowl, enveloping her, halo-like, in a soft cloud of aromatic steam.



"It's still warm," she gasped, looking at me through eyes swollen with tears. Her son had just been killed in Vietnam. Her living room was filling with family and friends, a dining room table with food.

Her face held such gratitude that I understood, in that moment, that this is what we do for each other, provide warmth and comfort when we can't give it to ourselves. It is a lesson I have never forgotten.

Where you used to be, there is a hole in the world, which I find myself constantly walking around in the daytime, and falling in at night.

~Edna St. Vincent Millay

Surviving Death

We do not recover from the death of a loved one. In fact, we *never* recover from that death in the same way we recover from an illness or broken limb. It will always be a part of us—*always*—and to suggest otherwise is unrealistically and harshly to imply that we somehow “get over” the feelings about the event or stop experiencing painful reminiscences of the loved one or the death.

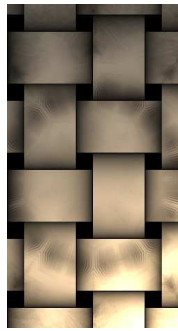
A much more accurate metaphor is represented in the old Carole King song “Tapestry.”

My life has been a tapestry of rich and royal hue

An everlasting vision of the ever-changing view

A wondrous woven magic in bits of blue and gold

A tapestry to feel and see, impossible to hold.



In fact our lives are “tapestries,” and the death of a loved one is a ripping, gaping, bleeding hole in the very midst of that tapestry of our life. How, then, is the tapestry *rewoven*? It does not, with the mere passage of time, magically pull itself back together. Rather, it is rewoven only with the initiative, energy, and strength of the survivor reaching in and grasping the torn ends of threads, painfully pulling them back and tying them together. And it is rewoven only with those persons *around* the survivor cutting threads from their *own* tapestries and bringing them to the survivor, with love and support and caring and tears and strength, helping to

further tie the threads and fill in the gaping hole.

So, eventually, the tapestry is rewoven. But that “glitch” is always there, the roughness of that rewoven is, and always will be, apparent. In fact it may be twenty years from now, as the survivor reviews the tapestry of his or her life, or is in a particular setting, or hears a song on the radio, or remembers a special day of the month, that the rewoven seam is seen and felt again, and the survivor remembers and cries, or feels sad, or is touched by the love and caring expressed by those whose threads are apparent there—and that is perfectly normal. We do not *recover* from a death, but when we allow others to help, we can *reweave* our tapestry.

— Charles Meyer

The Child Who Wasn't Perfect

I cannot say, as I have heard other parents say, “My child has always been a joy and pleasure; never gave me a minute’s trouble,” I cannot say that. I had a son who was always trouble. He was born cross and irritable, real trials from the word go.

He seemed to be in protest at having been born, from his very-first breath and outcry, through the rest of his life. His thirty seven years of life were one long outcry of protest, misery and unhappiness. He expressed his tormented spirit through music, poetry and a beautiful American Indian spirituality. But in spite of the pain that was in his heart, he had a wide smile and a hearty big laugh for everyone that belied the torment that raged inside him. He had a strange, mysterious wild charm, to which all who met him fell victim. He seemed to be born in the

wrong time, wrong culture, with a crippled spirit, and a body that carried a fatal flaw; the fatal flaw of addiction. He put himself and his family through the agony of the damned.

Step by step, he destroyed himself, as we watched with grieving hearts. He rejected every effort to save him. Then came that fateful week; some mystery reached out for him; his body, his spirit defied every weapon at science’s disposal to diagnose and save him. One by one his vital functions failed and he was gone. The word “forever” suddenly had a new and terrible-meaning.

So, he was hard to love; but we loved him every step of the way. We had him because we wanted him and we loved him every minute of his life. Our grief has been no less because he was

not a perfect child. It has just been an extension of the agony that we were helpless against the monster called addiction that destroyed him. Yesterday, was his birthday, I longed for the sight and sound of him, and that wild melancholy charm that vanished a year and a half ago. My heart stays full of tears; they are always just beneath the surface. I struggle daily to keep them out of sight and my fellow man, who does not want to share my pain. So, I come home and sit on my porch in the dark; listen to the night sounds; stare into space and I cry for my child who wasn’t perfect.

Jane Miller TCF, Atlanta, GA



SHOES by Mary Rondeau Westra

Nine big boxes came back home. Boxes of clothing, boxes of books and photo albums and papers, ump-teen athletic bags, three bikes, golf clubs, four pairs of skis ... Random belongings of a tall, energetic, active son who was kicked to death by bouncers in Atlantic City, NJ, during a bachelor party with college buddies. Our 24-year-old son, Peter, died in July 2001.

I never guessed it would take so long. After four and a half years, we'd nearly finished sorting through the boxes. We rented a storage unit. Slowly and deliberately, every few months, we spent a couple of hours going through his stuff, saying good-bye, saying hello. We were getting to know him all over again. We looked into every notebook, searched every pocket for what my husband called "hidden treasures," resorted, took home a few items for our own closets. Several T-shirts and baseball caps were given to his friends, household goods were appropriated by his sisters, and carloads went to charity. Mark, shorter than his son by a couple of inches, decided to rebuild Peter's bike one Peter built for a high school class project and he's ridden it on many long-distance trips. Recently Mark took one of Peter's business suits in for alterations, still unwilling to toss the expensive purchase from Jermyn Street in London where Peter was working as an investment banker at the time of his death.

For me, it's the shoes. I just can't part with the shoes. My fixation started with black Bally loafers soon after the moving truck pulled out of our driveway. Not able to stop myself from exhorting the young men unloading the boxes to be careful when they went to bars with their buddies, I started pawing through the boxes as soon as they left. At the top, just under creamy white packing paper, I found the Bally loafers that Peter had worn on the last day my family spent to-

gether. I snatched one of the shoes, sniffed it, hugged it to my chest. Then I took the shoe, my journal, and a few photos down to the lake behind our house in order to spend time alone with Peter on the dock that had already become my mourning bench. The shoe was an immediate, visceral link to the living, breathing son I could hardly believe would not be coming home again.

A few months later, in the early fall, I buried that black Bally loafer under red tulip bulbs in a new garden patch I planted in memory of Peter. Digging in the clay, tucking the shoe among bulbs, smoothing the surface of the soil with my bare hands, the task gave me a sense of grounding Peter again in the yard where he'd kicked soccer balls and he and his dad had played lacrosse, among the bushes he used to trample in pursuit of balls, at the edge of the lawn he used to mow to earn his allowance. When a crew came last year to plant new arborvitae in the spot that had proved too shady for tulips, I wondered if they'd uncover the shoe and what they'd think if they did. Sure enough. When I went to inspect their work at the end of the day, the loafer was sitting on top of fresh mulch next to a new tree. It sits there still.

My husband tries to wear the brown business tie shoes. He polished them and put them in his closet. I can recognize them as Peter's whenever he wears them because of the gap at the back of his heel. Peter's size 14 shoes are hard to fill.

Such a motley, well-worn collection. Raggedy athletic shoes, sparkling white leather tennis shoes, Doc Martens purchased in London when his parents came to visit during his college junior year abroad, indoor soft-soled soccer shoes, outdoor soccer cleats-still stinky-along with shin guards, bike shoes, and

three pairs of ski boots as well as one pair of boot covers to keep his feet warm in below-zero Minnesota temps.

Most of the shoes are still tied! That speaks volumes about the personality of the active young man who wore them. Too busy to bend down to untie them, he'd rather put the toe of one against the heel of the other to work his way out of the shoe in a hurry.

Each shoe tells its story. Its creases and muscle marks, its lining worn away, the treads full of mud. Each tells of miles trod and adventures enjoyed. And Peter's foot inhabited every one of them! They took him places. They helped him accomplish dreams, win games, ski slopes, tackle business. They held his life and his breath.

I'll get over the shoes. God knows I've gotten over a lot more than I ever thought I could. Now I know grief is a journey with its own many steps, a process with its own timetable that takes us places we never intended, or wanted, to go. It's a journey on which we are embarked and from which we learn in spite of our moments of intransigence.

I'm confident I'll be able to part with the shoes eventually. For now, just today, I'll gaze at them awhile longer, remember the tall, lanky son who wore them, sigh a couple of times, shed a few tears. Maybe tomorrow I'll take them to Goodwill. Hopefully another young man with size 14 feet will be able to put them to good use.

I hesitate ... maybe the brown-and-white golf shoe would look good among my pan-sies.



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Love Gifts—There are no dues or fees to belong to The Compassionate Friends. Some parents remember a birthday or anniversary date of their child, or a holiday with a love gift. The “Love Gifts” help with the mailing of the newsletter, maintaining and updating our library and meeting costs. Please send love gifts to David Fields, P.O. Box 647, Nicholasville, KY 40340 . Please remember, if given in memory of your child, to include his/her full name.

A very special **Thank You** to those who contribute love gifts to the basket during monthly meetings. We greatly appreciate your support!



REMEMBER: To have your child included on “Our Children” webpage, please contact our webmaster Keith at tcfbluegrass@yahoo.com. Corrections to Birth Dates or Remembrances should be sent to Rebecca at rwolochxxx@gmail.com.

A Change to the TCF Bluegrass Newsletter

Our monthly newsletter is sent to members and friends via email and posted online at our website at www.tcfbluegrass.org. A quarterly newsletter containing excerpts from the monthly editions will be mailed to any member who would like to receive it in print. We strongly encourage those with internet access to unsubscribe from the mailed edition saving resources and funds as well as being ecologically minded. To unsubscribe from the print edition, please send an email to Janie at Butterflymom@alltel.net.



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In the dark immensity of night
I stood upon a hill and watched the light
Of a star,
Soundless and beautiful and far.

A scientist standing there with me
Said, “It is not the star you see,
But a glow
That left the star light years ago.”

People are like stars in a timeless sky;
The light of a good person’s life shines high,
Golden and splendid
Long after his brief earth years are ended.

— Grace V. Watkins

A child that loses a parent
is an orphan.
A man who loses his wife
is a widower.
A woman who loses her
husband is a widow.
There is no name for a
parent that loses a child,
for there is no word to
describe this pain.

~unknown~

After the death of a child, it becomes crystal clear. We humans are capable of enduring much more than we can ever imagine. Knowing that doesn’t make grief one bit easier. The painful truth is that we simply do what we must do.

We do the unthinkable— day after day.

Carol Clum