



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
LEXINGTON—BLUEGRASS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER
207 RINEY B WAY
NICHOLASVILLE, KY 40356

PAGE I

FEBRUARY 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

ANNE AND BOB McDONNELL: (859) 278-8965

MONIQUE PODGORSKI:
(859) 381-8256

CONNIE KOTZBAUER:
(859) 273-3645

Note—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. Thanks!

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

CHAPTER CO-LEADERS:

Treasurer and Newsletter Mailings:

Newsletter Editor:

Hospitality:

JIM S. & STEPHANIE M.

David & Janie F.

Rebecca W.

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

February—Stephanie M. *Ask-It Basket*

(Members will anonymously write a question on a piece of paper and add it to the basket. Questions will be selected from the basket and discussed by the group).

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.

Bill and Barbara Thomason, parents of **Marcie Reynolds** (August 27, 2006)

Kevin Freeman, father of **Ivy Britton** (October 17, 2007)

Barbara Hisle, mother of **Joe Collins** (February 22, 2007)

Gale Brown, mother of **Zane Gregory** (November 2, 2007)

Bud and Gwen Preston, grandparents of **Emily Ann Preston** (August 22, 2006)

National News and Notes

Nashville, Tennessee, known as the home of country music, will be the host city for the 31st national conference of The Compassionate Friends July 18-20, 2008.

The conference committee selected the theme *Volunteers for Healing—Friends for the Future*, a name that is very appropriate as TCF national conferences are always regarded as great healing experiences and a great place to find friends for life. The 2008 conference will have special guest speakers and entertainers, more than 100 workshops covering most aspects of grief following the



death of a child, and many additional activities including the ninth annual two-mile Walk to Remember at 8 a.m. Sunday July, 20. A pre-conference day for professionals will be Thursday, July 17. Among the keynote speakers will be Joe and Iris Lawley, founding parents of The Compassionate Friends, who will fly all the way from England for what may be one of their final TCF speaking engagements outside of their home country.

To allow everyone to be a part of the 2008 conference committee experience, the conference committee plans to decorate the confer-

ence area with real 7" vinyl records that have pictures of our TCF children remembered in the center. The "sponsor a record" program is similar to programs available for previous conferences. For a nominal charge (to help defray the cost of the conference), pictures sent in of our TCF children will be placed on the records (which are pressed with real grooves, but will not have music) and will decorate the registration area, and reflection and hospitality rooms. To participate, download the sponsor a record order form (from the TCF website) and follow the easy instructions.

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Local News and Notes

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF FRANKFORT 2008 CONFERENCE

"FROM THIS DAY FORWARD"

March 28-29, 2008 First Christian Church Frankfort, KY

Conference Fee ~ \$45.00 per person, includes light breakfast pastries, catered box lunch, and a Memory Walk at Cove Springs Children's Memorial Garden on Friday, March 28 at 1:00 p.m.

Opening Ceremony on Friday evening, March 28 at 6:30 p.m. will include a Candle Light Program honoring all of our children that have died. Alan Pedersen, bereaved parent from Englewood, Colorado, will be performing.

Guest Speakers

Pat Loder ~ Executive Director, TCF National Organization

Alan Pedersen ~ Distinguished Singer/Songwriter

Elaine Edden Stillwell, M.S. ~ Former Regional Director, Author

Charlie Walton ~ Author of "Packing for the Big Trip" and "When There Are No Words"

Sandy Goodman ~ Author of "Love Never Dies"

Registration form available online at: <http://www.geocities.com/frankfortkytcf/>

No dog can track his smell, no mirror can capture his reflection.

No call can draw him near.

**Only faded photographs and incomplete memories that attempt
to hold on to his likeness remain.**

**He is gone.....lost forever in a place I cannot find,
leaving barely a trace of himself behind.**

By Carla Sizemore, in memory of her brother, Dean Sizemore

National News and Notes (cont'd)

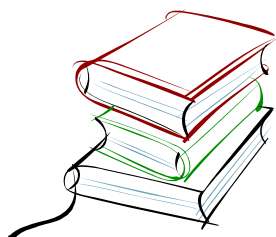
Whether or not you are able to attend the conference, a child, sibling, grandchild, or loved one can still be remembered.

Those who attend the conference and have a record made will be able to carry them home. After the conference concludes, those unable to attend who would like their child's record can have it mailed to them.

The conference will be held at the Sheraton Music City Hotel and a room rate of \$124 (plus tax) is now available for guests attending the conference. You can take advantage of this rate by calling 888-627-7060. Please mention that you are with The Compassionate Friends.

You may also register online at <http://thecompassionatefriends.org> As always it is suggested that you

register early to avoid disappointment. This rate will be available through June 20, 2008 (or until the room block has been filled). The beautiful Sheraton Music City Hotel, which recently completed a multi-million dollar renovation, is located at 777 McGavock Pike, Nashville, TN. 37214. As always, we suggest you register early to avoid disappointment.



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 if you have any books you'd like to donate. Contact Mary with your donations.

**“What we have once enjoyed, We can never lose.
All that we love deeply becomes a part of us.” — Helen Keller**

February Birth Dates

- 2/1/71 **Kevin Brant Prenatt** 2/25/95 Son of Susan J. Prenatt
 2/3/83 **Brian Alan Frith** 11/1/84 Son of Larry and Rowena Frith
 2/3/80 **Brian J. Bergin "Bri"** 10/2/98 Son of Robert and Sherry Lowry
 2/6/64 **David Allen Rose** 8/4/84 Son of Ralph and Carmileta Rose
 2/7/99 **Jacob Issac Gibson** 6/22/00 Son of Veronica and Darrell Gibson
 2/8/60 **Keith Allen Gadbois** 12/23/83 Son of George Gadbois
 2/8/75 **Glenn Cope** 3/13/91 Son of Sheila Cope
 2/12/82 **Christopher Michael Jackson** 12/15/02 Son of Guy and Debbie Jackson
 2/14/64 **Mark Christopher Wills** 1/4/84 Son of John and Patricia Wills
 2/15/71 **Bill Varney** 4/15/94 Son of Judy Varney
 2/15/69 **Eugenia L. Morton** 5/14/05 Daughter of Eugene and Joyce Morton
 2/16/76 **Dawn Chrystine Beckett** 6/14/01 Daughter of Mike and Lynn Lindsey
 2/17/76 **Bobby Sherman Parsons** 3/21/05 Son of Anna McKinney
 2/18/56 **James Michael Farris** 4/18/00 Son of Hulda Farris
 2/18/93 **Christopher Thomas Miller** 9/12/99 Son of Colleen and Tim Miller
 2/21/75 **Stan Caudill** 5/4/02 Son of Tom and Patricia Tschop
 2/22/56 **Michael Becraft** 2/25/90 Son of Raymond and Lucille Becraft
 2/24/79 **Kristopher Ryan Gordon** 2/25/95 Son of David and Chris Gordon
 2/25/82 **Missy Fields** 5/9/04 Daughter of David and Janie Fields
 2/26/01 **Griffin Alexandar Watson-Mills** 2/26/01 Son of Blake Mills & Candice Watson
 2/27/74 **Trista Erin Lane Hail** 4/24/02 Daughter of Bill and Debbie Lane
 2/28/57 **Melody Cay Guffey** 2/23/00 Daughter of George Foley
 2/28/69 **Kimberly Sue Toye** 6/7/94 Daughter of Gail Toye
 2/28/81 **Joshua Scott Barker** 4/27/99 Son of Deborah Barker

February Remembrances

- 2/4/00 **Tressa Parsons Adams** 6/10/69 (Born) Daughter of Linda and Bobby Parsons
 2/5/02 **Sheena Christine Kiser** 12/26/90 (Born) Daughter of Tina Kiser
 2/5/07 **James "Jamie" Earl Flynt** 3/15/72 (Born) Son of Suzie McDonald
 2/6/90 **Andrea Kaye Huggins** 8/16/71 (Born) Daughter of Jim and Sheila Huggins
 2/6/99 **Brandon Todd Wilson** 7/15/70 (Born) Son of Bob and Starr Wilson
 2/13/01 **Jerry Denver Ison** 1/20/71 (Born) Son of Genett Ison
 2/14/06 **Steven Matthew Service** 10/2/65 (Born) Son of Ruth McGill
 2/16/01 **David Michael Harmon** 8/20/74 (Born) Son of Jody Harmon & Luanne Murphy
 2/16/01 **David Michael Harmon** 8/20/74 (Born) Son of Jody Harmon & Luanne Murphy
 2/18/88 **Jack Charles Bahm, II** 3/16/70 (Born) Son of Jack Bahm
 2/18/90 **Will Fister, III** 12/23/86 (Born) Son of Gayle and J. W. Fister
 2/21/02 **Brandon Lee Lorance** 3/31/73 (Born) Son of Callie Lorance
 2/22/90 **Hillary Paige Troidl** 7/30/81 (Born) Daughter of Jim and Barb Troidl
 2/22/97 **Robin Lee Webb** 5/14/80 (Born) Daughter of Ricky and Sharon Blakeman
 2/24/91 **Crystal Ann Knafl** 1/12/88 (Born) Granddaughter of Karen and John Knafl
 2/25/99 **Wicky Blakeman** 12/6/67 (Born) Son of Mr. & Mrs. Wendell Blakeman
 2/25/93 **P. J. Phillip Duncan** 5/27/82 (Born) Son of Donna Breeze
 2/25/95 **Ross Kemper** 8/13/78 (Born) Son of Becky Kemper
 2/26/74 **Jacob "Jay" Lovenguth** 4/20/49 (Born) Son of Jake and Markeata Lovenguth
 2/27/91 **Tony R. Applegate** 4/13/62 (Born) Son of Dolly Wallace Bellomy
 2/27/93 **Vicki Lyn Easter** 9/16/52 (Born) Daughter of Beulah Williams
 2/27/95 **Chris Rudnick** 9/30/70 (Born) Son of Julia Rudnick-Woodall

From our Chapter Leader

Happy Birthday to all of us! The Bluegrass Chapter has just had its 28th birthday. Who knew we are approaching that over 30 milestone. We were “born” January 17, 1980 at 7:30 pm when 7 bereaved parents and 3 interested professionals met on Albany Rd. in Lexington. Jo Hepburn, Jim & Iris McLaughlin, Mary Haynes, Mary & John McCarthy and Nat Amoozegar witnessed this beginning as they gathered at Jo’s home. They probably didn’t but I envision them sitting around the kitchen table just as the Lawleys and the Hendersons did when The Compassionate Friends was founded in England in 1969. How grateful we are to that seven, former chaplain Bonnie Lossie and those that soon followed to lay the foundation for our group. Jo Hepburn not only was the driving force behind forming the chapter but also was the chapter leader for 9 years. How blessed we are that Jo continues today to be an active member providing warm hugs, sage advice and being such an inspirational example to all that we can “survive” and find that quiet peace she exhibits. Thanks also to the other (13) chapter leaders/co-leaders, newsletter editors, treasurers, facilitators and countless others that have given their time and effort as leaders of the group. I hope to “soon” compile a chapter history and I welcome information that anyone can provide of the people and events that have been a part of our past.

Many of you know of our newly revised website www.tcfbluegrass.org. The site was planned and developed for the needs of members, the newly bereaved, friends and families as well as others wanting information about the loss of a child or The Compassionate Friends. They can find out who we are, what we do and how we feel. There’s meeting information, planned events and newsletters along with information about grief, grieving and coping with the death of one’s child. Articles for friends and families tell what we want, don’t want and how they can best help us. And very importantly, the newly bereaved can find that they are not alone and that we are here to help. Best of all, it’s a place that we can showcase our children, to remember and honor them. An email address is provided if you want your child’s name listed or want to create a tribute page. An enormous debt of gratitude is owed to Rebecca Woloch for her tireless efforts to design this website.

You may have noticed that Rebecca is now newsletter editor replacing Brandi. Thanks Brandi, we appreciate the wonderful job you did. We’re going to monthly newsletters that will be sent only via email and posted on our website. A quarterly compilation of the monthly editions will be printed and mailed. However, because of the cost of printing and mailing along with the work involved to fold, staple, label and mail, the goal is to transition to the monthly digital version only. Let us know if the email edition is sufficient for you and we will not mail you a paper copy.

I hope that many of you enjoyed the holidays and the rest found an acceptable way to tolerate, get through, exist or cope with those hollowdays. It’s now a new year and my wish is that we all find a way to have a much better 2008.

Jim Sims

Our “updated” website

The Bluegrass Chapter of TCF has a new website located at www.tcfbluegrass.org. We are hopeful that the information available will prove valuable not only to our current members but also to our community, locally and globally — with resources for both the bereaved and those who wish to be of assistance and help to the bereaved.



Website hosting and management have been graciously provided by Jim Sims in memory of his son Jeff, design and layout were completed by Rebecca Woloch in memory of her son Jesse Higginbotham. Our webmaster is Keith LaVey, with Bruce Koenig serving as backup webmaster.

Our Chapter is offering to host a one-page online memorial for our members children to be included on our website. You may chose from several banners and font styles, submit three photos (digital if possible, please) as well as text to include. To have a page designed please email information to rwolochxxx@gmail.com with “Children” in the subject line.

A template is available for viewing at www.tcfbluegrass.org/childrentemplate.html with suggestions on items you might wish to include. The page layout is being provided free of charge by Rebecca in honor of Jesse who patiently (for the most part!) taught her a little web design and some HTML. :) <3

Valentine Love - New Meaning for Bereaved Parents

Though winter's delicate, lacy snowflakes may remind us of the lace-trimmed hearts of February's valentines, the "mourning" heart seems frozen in time. The bitter winds of loneliness blow mournfully through our souls.

Death has tapped us on the shoulder, introducing his brother, Grief, who has moved into our hearts to take up unwelcome residence. Wearing and exhausted by our pain, we have little energy to evict the intruder. It's hard for us to remember that the sun still faithfully shines behind the clouds and have obscured our vision.

"Love" is apparently the thought of the season, and we are reminded of its tenderness at every turn. But a piece of the fiber of our lives has been torn away, and love seems a vague and unfulfilled promise that belongs only to others.

Hearts and flowers, lace and

love, romantic verse and melody seem to have abandoned us as we grope in the darkness of our beloved's absence. Will the pain ever end? Will the hope and joy and renewal once again warm the frozen places in our hearts?

Gradually, as the hurt begins to soften, the thawing relief of healing slowly begins to melt the icy grip of our pain, hope does begin to "spring eternal". Roses, traditional in February's favorite holiday, remind us that summer will return.

It's unlikely that we will ever again perceive the usual symbols of love in quite the same way as before, but in many ways our concepts of genuine love will be stronger, richer and less assailable. Frivolous and shallow affection are absent from our thoughts. Deeper commitments and more demonstrative attention have become



our new marching orders.

In costly lessons, we've learned firsthand how fragile and fleeting life can be, and we are now resolute in our determination to announce to our remaining dear ones the importance of our bonds with them. We abandon the intimidation of "limits" such as the archaic notions that "men" mustn't cry or say "I Love You" or that we're too busy just not to pay attention to someone's needs.

As little by little, our pain softens and recedes, and we learn that suffering is but for a season, we also learn that LOVE doesn't die. In our emotional lives, Valentines can now take on a new significance as precious reminders of the love that still exists on both sides of life. Love lives within our hearts, and even Grief cannot steal it away. Love is our bridge over the rainbow.

Andrea Gambrell -reprinted from Bereavement Magazine

AFTER SOME TIME - IT IS STILL OKAY TO CRY



It seems to be acceptable to go for counseling or therapy during the early months of grief.

But what happens after a certain amount of time has passed and you feel yourself being "ambushed" by the first raw feelings of grief? Most people think you should just "buck up" and look around you and count the blessings you have left. These are worthy and meritorious attitudes, but sometimes they are simply unattainable, at least for a little while. We have lost MUCH when

we lost our child. Sometimes we have to remind ourselves that it is okay to relapse, that there is nothing wrong with us when we feel alone and sad, that there is no shame in backtracking to the dark recesses of grief, for it is in those times when we give way to the hurt and pain that we acknowledge how MUCH our child continues to matter to us. We sometimes have to allow ourselves "space" to be sad and permission to cry over the simple sadness of no longer having our

child with us.

They **MATTERED** to us. They still do. **WE CONTINUE** to remember them, to love them, and to miss them. **"IT IS STILL OKAY TO CRY."**

May each of you weep tears of release for the child that you so deeply continue to love and miss. With the deepest respect and compassion for my fellow grievers,

Faye McCord, TCF/ Jackson, Ms. In memory of Lane McCord (1/26/65-9/13/98)

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.



In Memoriam

With you a part of me hath passed away;
For in the peopled forest of my mind
A tree made leafless by this wintry wind
Shall never don again its green array.
Chapel and fireside, country road and bay,
Have something of their friendliness resigned;
Another, if I would, I could not find,
And I am grown much older in a day.
But yet I treasure in my memory
Your gift of charity, and young hearts ease,
And the dear honour of your amity;
For these once mine, my life is rich with these.
And I scarce know which part may greater be,—
What I keep of you, or you rob from me.

George Santayana



Helpful websites:

<http://www.griefnet.org/>

<http://www.goodgriefresources.com/>

<http://www.thebereavementjourney.com/>

<http://www.nationalsshareoffice.com/>

<http://www.survivorsofsuicide.com/>

<http://thecompassionatefriends.org>

<http://www.griefwatch.com/>

<http://journeyofhearts.org/>

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



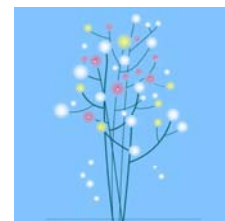
Just Once By: Barbara A. Daniels Lenexa, Kansas

Just Once, I wish I could have spent a late hour rocking you in my arms.

Just Once, I wish I could have gently lain you in your crib, I wish I could have changed a diaper, chosen an outfit for the day, given you a bath, soothed your skin with lotion...

Just Once, I wish I could have heard you cry out in loneliness for me, spent time alone with you, just the two of us, strolled you proudly through the shopping mall ...

Just Once, I wish I could have heard the words, “What a beautiful, healthy baby girl!” Just Once.



NOT GUILT, REGRET



One of our basic responsibilities as parents is to keep our children from harm. So, when anything happens to them, we feel guilty whether we could realistically have done anything or not. When the ultimate tragedy occurs, we are devastated. How could we let it happen? Why didn't we stop it? If we have compounded our guilt with any degree of human error of commission or omission, we are beyond devastation. Even words, either of anger or left unspoken, haunt us.

Guilt implies intent. If we intended to harm our child, we can feel guilty of that. If we never intended harm to ever, ever come to our child, the correct name for our emotion is regret. The crushing pain is still there, but regret is softer, gentler, less judgmental, and easier to forgive and to heal. It is also more accurate. If that name doesn't feel strong enough for our feelings, it will in time. Let it float there and try it now and then. Not guilt - we feel regret.

— Kitty Sanders, Nashville, TN Survivors of Suicide Group

Fixing a Hole: Grieving With Other Men by Tom Golden, LCSW

There I was dripping in sweat, the kind that rolls down the side of your head and innocently into your ear. The still summer evening was allowing me to hear my own breath and my own thoughts. I was determined to make this a great hole and I kept digging—probably farther than I really needed to, but on I went. What seemed like a great deal of sweat was swallowed effortlessly by the hole, absorbed as a matter of course by the dirt in the bottom. The hole and the dirt were equally unmoved by the tears I shed.

This hole was to be the home of a tree that was being given as a memorial to my father who had died the previous November. I had known the hole needed digging, but had put off the task until now—now being just about the last possible moment it could be dug. As I continued digging, I found myself flooded with memories of my

father. My thoughts moved back and forth between recent events leading up to his death and childhood experiences. I remembered his engineering talents and nature and tried to dig the hole in a way that would please him.

As I dug, the feelings flowed through me: the sadness of missing him, the gratefulness of having been his son, and the anger and frustration of my powerlessness. All of these feelings found their way into this hole. The act of digging became an avenue for the various thoughts and feelings to arise. Through the action I was opened to my own inner world.

I started wondering why I had put off this job, then realized that I hadn't, and didn't, want to do it. Actually digging the hole brought the death more into reality, and a part of me didn't want that. I've learned to accept this part of me that

wants to deny things. Denial is not really such a bad thing, and it doesn't go away as quickly as some people seem to think. I've noticed it has a slow, zigzag decay that can last a long time. In a way, denial can be our friend, allowing us to slowly accept the reality at hand. I became aware of the battle going on between the denying part and the digging-the-hole part. As a friend of mine says, "We have wetware, not hardware."

The tree was planted in an emotional ritual attended by myself and the six men who donated the tree. The activity became an avenue for all of us to delve into our interiors and connect with a variety of issues, from relationships with our fathers to the finality of death. The activity of buying, digging, planting, and gathering together became a

Cont'd "Fixing a Hole"

THOSE OF US WHO ARE CHILDLESS

Many of us attend support group meetings for one reason - a child of ours has died. For some of us, however, the child that died was the only child we had, and though our pain is certainly no worse than those who have surviving children, there are differences. "We" will never hear the word "Mom" or "Dad" again. "We" have no hope of grandchildren. "We" only have ourselves to go on for. During the past seven years there has been many times when I have cringed in meetings as a fellow bereaved parent inadvertently hurt me. How can you as a compassionate friend help?

I have listed some ways to make it easier for a parent, with no surviving child, to be comfortable at support group meetings.

- * When a parent with no surviving children is in your group, please don't bring out the pictures of your grandchildren. Save them for someone who at least has the hope of grandchildren. We do not.

- * Though you may have special problems with your surviving child (children) don't expound on them. We would love to have any problem at all.

- * Please don't say, "I don't know how you bear it." That is equivalent to someone who has not had a child to die saying the same words to you. We "bear it" because we have no choice, just as you do not.

- * Please do not tell us, "But you have your husband/wife." It's just not the same.

- * Please don't say, "You don't have the worry about having another child die." We would love to have that worry.

- * Please do not tell us that entering menopause is nothing to be concerned about. To us, it is the ending of a chance that we will ever have a child to parent again.

- * Please do not bring "surprises" to meetings. Support groups are for adults and while there are occasions when bringing a child is appropriate, please do not do

so unannounced. The sight of a child (be it your own, or a grandchild) may bring tears to my eyes. I want to be "safe" just as you do.

- * If you are fortunate enough to have another child. I am happy for you. But please do not tell me the details of your pregnancy. For some of us, that is not an option.

- * Please don't tell us there are lots of children in this world to "parent". This may be true, and while I may do so someday, it must be my choice.

- * I understand that grief is not a contest. I know my pain is not worse than yours, but it is different, and there are different bridges to cross. Thank you for being compassionate to all of us.



Vicki
In memory of my son, Sandy
ALIVE ALONE SPRING, 1998

Fixing a Hole: Grieving With Other Men (cont'd)

hub for a wide variety of spin-offs. As we stood around the tree, we all had a chance to speak and to listen, and somehow having an activity made this process flow smoothly. It would have been much more difficult to simply sit in a circle and talk about our feelings. It was through the doing that we could connect.

Death professionals have long been confounded by the difference in men and women in vis-

iting gravesites, which is that the men tend to visit more often. My own experiences have given me a deeper understanding of why this takes place. Men tend toward linking their grief with a place, action, or thing. There have been many examples presented in this book: the man who wore his deceased daughter's ring as a remembrance of her, the man who carved a bust of his wife after her death, the man who built a pond in memory of his

murdered brother, the man who wore his father's watch, and so on. These activities are often quiet and unseen by most people. The casual observer might assume that the man is "not grieving," but that is many times not the case.



Excerpted from the Epilogue of the second edition of *Swallowed by a Snake: The Gift*

REMEMBER: To have your child included on the "Our Children" page, please contact our webmaster Keith LaVey at tcfbluegrass@yahoo.com.

Corrections to Birth Dates and Angel Dates should be sent to Rebecca at rwolochxxx@gmail.com.

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. The following love gift has been donated to our chapter in memory of the following:

Given in loving memory of *Missy Fields* by her parents, **David and Janie Fields**.

Please send **love gifts** to **David Fields, 207 Riney B Way, Nicholasville, KY 40356**. Please remember, if given in memory of your child, to include his/her full name.

A Change to the TCF Bluegrass Newsletter

With the February edition comes a new MONTHLY format for our TCF Bluegrass Newsletter. The monthly edition will be sent to you via email as well as being posted online at our website at www.tcfbluegrass.org. A quarterly newsletter containing excerpts from our monthly newsletters will be mailed to any member who would like to receive it in print. We strongly encourage those with internet access to consider unsubscribing from the mailed edition—saving trees and the cost of postage (not to mention the countless hours of volunteer labor involved in the mailing process).

To unsubscribe from the print edition, send an email to Jim at KyWildcat1@alltel.net or Janie at Butterflymom@alltel.net. Please mark the subject line "print unsubscribe". You will still continue to receive the email newsletter! Additionally, if you know of someone who would appreciate receiving our online newsletter, let us know.

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



A GRIEVING PARENT IS...

By Judy Skapik

From the Sept. 2004 Newsletter of the Tampa Bay Chapter of BP/USA

A grieving parent is someone who will never forget their child no matter how painful the memories are.

A grieving parent is someone who yearns to be with their dead child but cannot conceive leaving their living ones.

A grieving parent is someone who has only part of a heart as the rest of it is buried with their child.

A grieving parent is someone who begs for relief from the memories which plague them and then feels guilty when they get it.

A grieving parent is someone who pretends to be happy and enjoying life when they really are dying inside.

A grieving parent is someone who

holds the lives of their remaining children as the most precious gift they have.

A grieving parent is someone who can cry or laugh at the drop of a hat whenever they remember their beloved child.

A grieving parent is someone who feels as if they just lost their child yesterday no matter how much time has passed.

A grieving parent is someone who fears for their remaining family because they cannot bear to have any more loss.

A grieving parent is someone who sits by their child's gravestone and feels a knife stabbing their heart.

A grieving parent is someone who wants to help others who have lost loved ones because somehow their loss is theirs all over again.



My Cover Up Mask

I wake in the morning with tears in my eyes. I have to face another day without my child. I prepare to go to work and put on my "cover-up" mask as I go out to face the world.

I get my work done and even chat and sometimes smile at my coworkers. And they say, "My, how well she seems to be handling her loss." If they only knew what I am suffering under my "cover up" mask. My work day is over, and I go home and remove my "cover-up" mask, and the tears come again.

I go to bed, and as the darkness of night envelops me and sleep eludes me, the tears come again. I have gotten through another day without my child. I have learned I must take one day at a time for the rest of my life, since it will never be the same again.

Joan Watson, Salisbury, MD