



The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families in the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child and to provide information to help others be supportive.

The Trail of Tears...Oklahoma City

How appropriate that the 30th National Conference is named the "Trail of Tears, To Healing Hearts". For as any one who has experienced the death of a child knows there has indeed been a trail of tears before our hearts can begin to heal. The people of Oklahoma have experienced their own tears after the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building.

As I am preparing for the conference I am wondering what can I offer the grandparents attending the Panel Discussion and my workshop, "Double Blessing, Double Pain"? It is a question I ask myself each year. There will be some people returning for another year and then there will be the newly bereaved. It is so important to allow time for the questions the new grandparents come with and it is my role to facilitate so that each person leaves feeling heard.

It has been a growing process as each year more grandparents are attending the conference. Maybe next year there will be an advanced workshop for the ones who have been there more than once or twice. Maybe another grandparent will come forward willing to offer a workshop. I sincerely hope so. I do know that it is important for us who have been traveling this path longer reach back to offer a hand and a hug to those who are just beginning the struggle on this journey.

As the evaluations are handed in the committee and the workshop presenters have an opportunity to look at what is working and keep it or if it isn't meeting the needs of the participants make the necessary changes. I never realized how much effort went into a conference until I became involved as a

Workshop Presenter.

Last year one of the panelist, a dad from my Arlington, VA Chapter, answered my question, "are you glad you came?" with, "Ask me when I have had time to process all that I have experienced in these few days".

Each person attending comes away with a different experience...one unique to their life and the life of their child. What is the same however is that we all understand the pain, and we look for hope that we will survive this unbearable grief. We know we will never be the same as we were before our child's death though we do have hope that our memories and our love will offer us a way to move forward to a new normal life.

As we do move forward we begin to look for ways to honor the memory of our child so he or she will never be forgotten. Some are able to be involved with their TCF chapter in some way while others take on a cause that may somehow be connected personally to the life or death of their child, such a volunteering with or raising money to support a medical group. Many set up scholarships in their child's memory. Whatever we do it is a step toward healing for us as we give back what has been given to us.

I hope I will have an opportunity to reach out to you in Oklahoma City and to share your story. Each year it is such a privilege to be part of the conference and I look forward to the hugs from new friends and old.

***HUGS, Betty Farrel, Sarah Louise's Nana
Arlington, VA Chapter TCF***



Calendar of TCF Meetings In Your Area

JULY 2007

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SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4 Leesburg	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12 Arlington	13	14
15	16	17	18 DC	19 PW	20 <u>30th TCF Conference</u>	21 <u>National</u>
22 <u>Walk To Remember</u>	23	24	25 BSF	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Arlington Chapter

For info contact Lois Copeland
301-530-1115 or
locopeland@aol.com
Please send "Love Gifts" to
Kent Womack 1013 Riverside Dr.
Woodstock, VA 22664

Trinity Presbyterian
Church
5533 N. 16th St
Arlington, VA

Meets the Second Thursday
This month's meeting will be
July 12, at 7:30 PM

Burke/Springfield/ Fairfax Chapter

For info contact Kathy or Chuck
Collins 703-425-9504
Ccollins21@cox.net Please send
"Love Gifts" to Kathy Collins
4505 Rachael Manor Dr. Fairfax,
VA 22032

THE OLD ST. MARY'S
KNIGHTS OF COULMBUS HALL
(LOCATED NEXT TO THE ST MARY'S
HISTORIC CHURCH AND
CEMETERY) At Fairfax Station Road
and Route 123, Fairfax, VA
****Note—NEW LOCATION**

Meets the Fourth Wednesday
This month's meeting will be
July 25, at 7:30 PM

Leesburg Chapter

For info contact Bev or Bernie
Elero 540-882-9707
Please send "Love Gifts" to
Mrs. Anne Shattuck, 224 Walnut
Ridge Lane, Palmyra, VA 22963

St. James Episcopal
Church
Janney Parlor
14 Cornwall St NW
Leesburg, VA

Meets the First Wednesday
This month's meeting will be
July 4, at 7:30 PM

Prince William Chapter

For info contact Ken Adams
703-361-6574 or
adamsksbjk@comcast.net
Please send "Love Gifts" to
Peggy Beach, 10404 Schaeffer
Lane, Nokesville, VA 20181

Grace United Methodist
Church
Library, 2nd Floor
9750 Wellington Rd
Manassas, VA

Meets the Third Thursday
This month's meeting will be
July 19, at 7:30 PM

Washington, DC Chapter

For info contact Olivia Gunter,
301-552-2798
Please send "Love Gifts" to
Coralease Ruff, 3314 Applegate
Ct., Oak Hill, VA 20171

The Howard University
The Blackburn Center
2397 Sixth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20059

Meets the Third Wednesday
This month's meeting will be
July 18, 7-9 PM

TCF National Headquarters

P O Box 3606
Oak Brook IL 60522-3696

www.compassionatefriends.org

877-969-0010 (Toll-Free)

Arlington Website

www.tcfarlington.org

Webmaster: Mary M. Bell
m.m.bell@verizon.net

Burke/Springfield/Fairfax Web

www.tcfbsf.org

Prince William Website

www.tcfprincewilliam.org

webmaster@tcfprwm.org

Arlington Chapter

TCF Meeting: Thursday, July 12
Place: Trinity Presbyterian Church
Enter 2nd Level

Time: 7:30pm

Topic: The seasons have changed again. Again we do not have our child or children, sibling or grandchildren to share this with. We will not be able to share the joys of summer that we once shared with our loved one. Swimming, fireworks, catching fireflies, boogy boarding, surfing, running on a beach, barbecues and sparklers on a clear summers night. These are memories that I have of my son David. What are your precious memories?

~~~~~

## Summer Delight

Where is the child who skipped through the sprays of summer rain and laughed his way into my heart? Where is the boy who climbed my trees and spied on me from behind the leaves? Where is the child with the suntanned legs who ran Fourth-of-July races in green parks? Where is the sleepy child who wrapped his arms around my neck and said, "when I grow up, I gonna marry you, Mom?" He's here.

He twines around our past, around my future, and takes me back home, and makes me young again as sure as summer comes. A suntanned spirit with an impish grin still whispers in my ear that stars are not stars at all but lightening bugs he's captured in a jar. In his youth he's my summer's glow, the sunshine in my garden, my comfort on long hot, summer nights of remembering.

Oh, where is that child of summer gladness? His laughter slides down summer rainbows and captures me with unbound glee, His summer brownness runs barefoot on my heart. With sun-bleached hair, he smiles at me from photos from summers



past, and I remember love.

Fay Harden  
TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL  
*Songs From the Edge*

## Thank You

*July will be my last meeting of The Compassionate Friends.*

*My precious son, Ben McGinn, was killed on his motorcycle on August 26<sup>th</sup> last year, he was 25. Because of Ben's death, my husband Peter, who is in the British Army asked to be posted home to the UK, we feel that we need to be closer to our other two sons, Matthew and Adam, Ben's wife Stephanie and Joshua, his 4 year old son.*

*Since I found the group I have felt a huge bond with all of you, we are all walking down the same awful path and trying to get on with life the best way we know how. The group has taught me that it is possible to look to the future and that there is hope of enjoying life again, but most of all that I am not alone. At the moment I cannot imagine ever being happy, but from the strength that I have gained from all of you I am convinced that with a huge effort, my life may one day return to some sort of normality although there will always be terrible sadness, one that will stay with me forever.*

*I would like to thank you all for welcoming me with your arms open. You will never know how much you have helped me through the first awful stages of my grief. I will miss my monthly meetings but I will continue to pray for the strength of each one of you to come to terms with the loss of your own precious child, grandchild or sibling.*

God Bless  
Lynn Barron, TCF, Arlington Chapter, VA



## SIBLING CORNER

### For David

**He** was a spark of spirit and heart.  
**He** was the looking glass for nature's laughter.  
**He** was a great adventurer on earth.  
**And** now he journeys in the universe.

**He** was not flawless, but he was complete:  
**A** human being in the finest sense.  
**He** was the one I loved more dearly than he knew,  
**He** was my own, my friend, my brother, David.



Anne Gherke From "Wintersun"

# Arlington Chapter

## You forgot to Say Goodbye

The pain is almost too much  
these days,

You see, you forgot to say  
goodbye

I miss your hugs and kisses and  
the way

You said, "Yo, Mom!"

You see, you forgot to say  
goodbye.

You always told me you would  
be right back

But you forgot to say goodbye.

Your guitar sits in the corner of  
the

living room/

I guess I will learn how to play it.

You forgot to say goodbye.

I will tell you for the umpteenth  
time

I love you and I miss you

You forgot to say goodbye.

But sometimes in the future  
when we

meet up in the sky

We won't have to worry about  
ever

saying goodbye.

~Charlene Barron, TCF Lower  
Bucks PA



## A Solitary Journey

Grief is a solitary journey. No one but you knows how great the hurt is. No one but you can 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 other people have made the same journey. And solace comes from understanding how others have learned to sing again.

~Helen Steiner Rice

## There are Ten Strong Things

Iron is strong,

but fire melts it.

Fire is strong,

but water quenches it.

Water is strong,

but the clouds evaporate it.

Man is strong,

but fear casts him down.

Fear is strong,

but sleep overcomes it.

Sleep is strong,

Yet death is stronger.

But loving kindness survives death.

~The Talmud

~~~~~  
In Honor of Brandon Mark Perle

Son of Michael and Patricia Perle

Brother of Lori Perle (Pohlman)

Time Apart, Time Together, Time Apart ...

July 31, 1974 ~ July 3, 2002

When you were born we enjoyed loving you, spending time looking at you and holding you in our arms.

Since you have left we continue the joy of loving you, still looking at you, now holding you in our hearts.

When you first entered our lives, you created the wonderment of where you came from, and awareness of the uncertain nature of the birth miracle.

When you left, you awakened us to the certainty of death, and the wonderment of what lies beyond.

The time we shared in between was rich with the diversity of emotional experiences that remains the essence of our continued, deep loving relationship.

Where there was failure there became success. Where there was uncertainty there grew self confidence. Where there was anger, there evolved forgiveness. Brandon as you so simply said to us, "There is no sweet, without the bitter."

The silence we now endure was born from the wonderful experience of having lived with your vibrant sound.

Now with you gone, our memories seem heightened and sharp. Our loving feelings and experiences with you are revisited frequently, and enjoyed. We draw comfort from the sense that you somehow participate, sharing these loving feelings along with us.

Parents do not move through the process of raising children from a stationary position of fixed maturity, or certainty. We stumble and grow right along with our children, all of us learning with and from each other, evolving as we pass through life. We all did a lot of growing together, our love bonds deepening with each shared experience.

~~~~~

~~~~~  
Before you arrived we had loving anticipation. While you were here with us we had lots and lots of love and we still experience that love. And since you have passed, we again have loving anticipation.

*Loving thoughts of our life with
Brandon Mark Perle*

He joined us on July 31, 1974

He passed on ahead of us on July 3, 2002

~~~~~

*A Glimpse of You*

I hear someone approaching  
A familiar gate and sound  
I turn to see a stranger  
Who has turned my head around.

I hear a guitar playing  
A familiar rhythm and chord  
But I know your guitar is in your room  
In the place where it is stored.

I thought I heard your laughter  
from young people on the street  
I could have sworn you were with them  
And I heard your name repeat.

In every red Dakota sport  
I see you driving by  
And wish it really were you  
In a hurry to pass me by.

Hi-top sneakers, baseball caps  
And curly golden brown hair  
Deep blue eyes and dimpled chin  
Your essence fills the air.

No matter where I'm going  
No matter what I do,  
I'll see some young man passing by  
And catch a glimpse of you.

*Written by Gala Simpson in Loving Memory of  
Colin MacArthur Simpson  
October 13, 1978 ` May 21, 1998  
Lovingly Lifted from TCF York Chapter, Pennsylvania*

~~~~~


So You Think You're Losing Your Mind...

Because you can't look at your child's pictures yet?

This is one area where there doesn't seem to be a middle ground; either you take great comfort in having pictures surrounding you, or you don't want any on display at all. There is nothing wrong with either reaction. If pictures are a problem for you, time may be the answer. A few special pictures may then offer comfort.

Trouble may arise when there are conflicting needs within a family. It is important that a parent who needs the pictures on display understands that those same pictures cause pain for another. It in no way connotes not caring or wanting to forget. It is, rather, just the opposite; the pain is there because there is so much love and caring. Try to be flexible in those areas of direct conflict.

Because you find yourself reading the obituaries since your child died - searching for names and ages of others who have died too young?

Well, if this is a sign you are losing your mind, you have lots of company. Some are drawn to the obituaries. Is it because we seek to know that we are not alone in this seemingly endless maze? That there are others out there who know the horror of losing a child and we need to identify with them? Not everybody has this need, but many do. It may be bothersome to your spouse because they may feel it is a sign of abnormal grief and is morbid. It isn't for some. You may do it for a time but eventually most people stop having the need. Don't worry about it.



Thank you for your Love Gifts

Sue and Mark Zalewski in memory of their daughter,
Becky Sue Zalewski (1/25/68 - 1/29/07)

Ken and Joyce Wilson in memory of their grandson,
Samuel Jason Wilson (10/22/04 - 5/25/05)

Because you find yourself thinking that it would be easier to join your child in death than to go through the pain of living without them?

We often hear this from lots of bereaved parents. They get so tired of the hurt. It frightens the parents that they are entertaining suicidal thoughts, but it must be a normal reaction for some to consider this as an alternative. Many parents, as they talk, are quick to agree that they are too responsible to really consider this as an answer. There are people who love and need them. They realize they could not purposefully put someone they love through the very hell they are seeking to escape. They are able to realize that it is not an answer.

Because you keep seeing someone who reminds you of your child?

Well, many of us do. You may even find yourself following along behind - just to make sure! The impulse may be to take them home with you. It may be all a part of denial process, but I suspect it is just because we miss them so much.

*-by Mary Cleckley, TCF newsletter October, 1997
Mount Vernon, Ohio chapter*



Don't Think I Do NOT Grieve

Don't think I do not feel because you see no tears;
A river rages deep inside of grief and loss and fears.
Just because I do not cry now, don't think my heart's not broken.
I keep inside the misery of words not to be spoken.
Sometimes I smile, or crack a joke, so you won't see the pain
Or notice how my hands will shake, or how I've gone insane.
Each time I chance to think of her/him, my heart is ripped
asunder.
The loss I feel is mine alone; you will not see my thunder.
~Author unknown

PRINCE WILLIAM CHAPTER

Butterflies & Rainbows

Robyn Bell – TCF, Valley Forge PA

You came to me on a Butterfly's wing, so very long ago.

When God had in his plans for us how could we possibly know?

I watched you laugh and play and dream as you grew into a man.

How beautiful you were to me, as you chased rainbows in the sand.

It's incomprehensible to think that you have gone away.

And you won't be coming back again, not even for a day.

Two years have come and gone since then and the sun still rises in the sky.

Butterflies and rainbows still exist, and I have stopped asking why.

Your light shines brightly in my heart and always will my dear.

You are with the rainbows there and I'm with the butterflies here.

How Long Will The Pain Last?

Author Unknown

How long will the pain last?" a broken hearted mourner asked me. "All the rest of your Life." I have to answer truthfully. We never quite forget. No matter how many years pass, we remember. The loss of a loved one is like a major operation. Part of us is removed, and we have a scar for the rest of our lives. As years go by, we manage. There are things to do, people to care for, tasks that call for full attention. But the pain is still there, not far below the surface. We see a face that looks familiar, hear a voice that echoes, see a photograph in someone's album, see a landscape that once we saw together, and it seems as though a knife were in the wound again. But not so painfully. And mixed with joy, too. Because remembering a happy time is not all sorrow, it brings back happiness with it.

How long will the pain last?

All the rest of your life. But the things to remember is that not only the pain will last, but the blessed memories as well. Tears are proof of life. The more love, the more tears. If this be true, then how could we ever ask that the pain cease altogether. For then the memory of love would go with it. The pain of grief is the price we pay for love.

Men Do Cry

by Ken Falk

I heard quite often "men don't cry" though no one ever told me why. So when I fell and skinned a knee, no one came by to comfort me.

And when some bully-boy at school would pull a prank so mean and cruel, I'd quickly learn to turn and quip, "It doesn't hurt," and bite my lip.

So as I grew to reasoned years, I learned to stifle any tears. Though "Be a big boy" it began, quite soon I learned to "Be a man."

And I could play that stoic role while storm and tempest wracked my soul. No pain or setback, could there be could wrest one single tear from me.

Then one long night, I stood nearby and helplessly watched my son die. And quickly found, to my surprise, that all that tearless talk was lies.

And still I cry, and have no shame. I cannot play that "big boy" game. And openly, without remorse, I let my sorrow take its course.

So those of you who can't abide a man you've seen, who's often cried, reach out to him with all your heart as one whose life's been torn apart.

For men DO cry when they can see their loss of immortality. And tears will come in endless streams when mindless fate destroys their dreams.

Are Like a Rose

Julie Timmerman – TCF, Tulsa, OK

When a child dies our memories are held tightly with lots of pain, just like the tightly folded petals of the rose but with the many thorns and pricks causing pain.

As we talk about our child and share memories with others, we begin to open ourselves to healing as the rose petals start to open ever so gradually.

Just as a rose becomes more beautiful as it blooms, so do the memories of our child.

Yes the thorns are still there and will hurt when touched, but oh how beautiful the rose and oh how beautiful the memory of our children!

Share the memory of your child, so that memory can start to bloom to become as beautiful as a rose.

Our July Children Remembered

Shay Allen

Jul 21, 1986 May 30, 2006
Darcel and Josh Allen
Burke\Springfield\Fairfax

Arturo Apodaca

Feb 03, 1972 **Jul 04, 2006**
Norma and Ed Apodaca
Burke\Springfield\Fairfax

Megan Kristene Bachman

Feb 25, 1981 **Jul 15, 2006**
Linda and Ed Bachman
Leesburg

Andrew Baker

Mar 02, 1983 **Jul 06, 2004**
Ellen Baker
Prince William

Mitchell Alan Blackwell

Apr 20, 1962 **Jul 23, 1992**
Vanessa Lemme
Arlington

Samuel Jermaine Blanks

Jul 11, 1975 Jun 22, 1995
Samuel and Betty Blanks
DC

George Boiardi

Jul 30, 1981 Mar 17, 2004
Mario and Debra Boiardi
Arlington

Christopher Buro

Jul 05, 1985 Dec 25, 2005
Kathleen Brandel
Arlington

Joshua Butler

Jul 16, 1983 Feb 21, 2005
David Butler
Burke\Springfield\Fairfax

Sean Campbell

Jul 21, 1997 Jun 13, 2004
Donald and Madelyn Campbell
Arlington

Joseph Paul Cerrtani

Jul 02, 1997 Feb 19, 2004
Sheryl Horneber
Leesburg

Jack Chen

Aug 12, 1982 **Jul 14, 2002**
James Tsai
Burke\Springfield\Fairfax

Suhail "Sid" Chowdhury

Apr 11, 1980 **Jul 06, 2000**
Anwar and Patricia Chowdhury
Prince William

Jason Clover

Jul 30, 1984 Sep 28, 2003
Cheryl Clover
Burke\Springfield\Fairfax

Matthew Coffelt

Sep 11, 1996 **Jul 07, 2005**
Debbie Coffelt
Leesburg

Brian Connor

Jul 14, 2004 Oct 17, 2004
Karen and Kevin Bablan
Burke\Springfield\Fairfax

Walter Dedrick

Jul 20, 1981 Mar 17, 2004
Ruby Dasher
Burke\Springfield\Fairfax

Peter M. DeGrazia

Jul 03, 1981 Aug 08, 2002
John and Corrine DeGrazia
Prince William

Child

Jul 23, 2002
Sandy Daigle
Burke\Springfield\Fairfax

Sean Legate Dobson

Jul 18, 1965 Jul 07, 1984
Dan and Deryl Dobson
Burke\Springfield\Fairfax

Korri Summer Duffield

Jul 29, 1997 May 31, 2003
Troy and Samantha Duffield
Prince William

Parris LaBelle' Evan

Aug 10, 1991 **Jul 18, 2001**
Victor and Teresa Bell
DC

Stuart Austin Evans

Nov 03, 1967 **Jul 11, 1986**
Thomas and Ruth Evans
Arlington

Will Foreman

Jul 27, 1987 Feb 24, 2006
Louise and Mark Foreman
Burke\Springfield\Fairfax

Danny Frank

May 23, 1984 **Jul 07, 2006**
Nancy and Mike Frank
Burke\Springfield\Fairfax

Matthew Rand Robert Gaber

Jul 02, 1976 Dec 21, 2002
Cathy Gaber
Prince William

Bill Geary

Jul 07, 2001
Shirley Geary
Burke\Springfield\Fairfax

Nancy Kathleen "Kate" Hagopian

Jul 08, 1994 Jul 29, 1994
Dave and Mary Hagopian
Arlington

Brad Hampton

Jul 04, 1973 Dec 03, 2004
Beth Hampton
Arlington

Amanda Harpin

Dec 13, 1990 **Jul 03, 2002**
Paul and Martha Harpin
Burke\Springfield\Fairfax

Karen Marie Eugene Harrelson

Apr 12, 1966 **Jul 09, 2002**
Sandra Harrelson
DC

Renard Anthony Harris

Jul 02, 1979 Mar 24, 2001
Pamela Williams-Walker
DC

Kasey Haynes

Mar 05, 1981 **Jul 20, 2005**
Elizabeth DiChristofaro
Burke\Springfield\Fairfax

Our July Children Remembered

David Evans Hobson
Jul 31, 1974 Mar 11, 2000
Anne Shattuck
Leesburg

Douglas Wayne Hosier
Apr 18, 1961 Jul 02, 1997
Wayne and June Hosier
Arlington

Steven Hulsey
Jul 01, 1971 Jul 24, 2004
Candace Hulsey
Leesburg

Eve Roseanne Jaffee
Jul 08, 1968 Jun 23, 2000
Rochelle Jaffe
DC

Eirik Jon Jespersen
Jul 22, 1987 Jul 08, 2002
Nils and Beth Jespersen
Leesburg

Paige Mackenzie Johnson
Jul 20, 1987 Dec 03, 2005
Trish and David Stoskus
Leesburg

Alex Leonard
Feb 06, 1976 Jul 29, 2003
Liz Kesler
Burke\Springfield\Fairfax

Gina Mary Manning
Aug 22, 1962 Jul 17, 1999
Kenneth and Geri Manning
Arlington

Kevan Carl Marfori-Ulsaker
Dec 11, 1979 Jul 12, 1998
Eva Ulsaker
Arlington

Joe Grant Mitchell
Aug 18, 1969 Jul 17, 1998
Barbara Loder
Arlington

Kenneth Muldrow Jr.
Jul 01, 1981 Dec 08, 2000
Kenneth and Sonya Muldrow
DC

Kevin Sweet
Jul 05, 1988 Sep 07, 2003
Dianne Nodland
Burke\Springfield\Fairfax

Andrew O'Brien
Jul 19, 1982 Feb 08, 2002
Missy O'Brien
Prince William

LaShaun Maria Parker
Nov 09, 1969 Jul 30, 1998
Lori and Barbara Parker
DC

William Patrick Pelasara
Jul 23, 1978 Jun 26, 1999
Toni Horn
Leesburg

Brandon Perle
Jul 31, 1974 Jul 03, 2002
Michael and Patricia Perle
Burke\Springfield\Fairfax

Cody DuWayne Pollard
Feb 29, 1996 Jul 09, 2004
Vernon and Andrea Pollard
Arlington

James Randall
Jul 10, 1967 Aug 18, 2004
Claire Randall
Burke\Springfield\Fairfax

Stephanie Reams
Jul 31, 1982 Sep 02, 2003
Chris Reams
Arlington

Clarie Alexis Sachse
Nov 09, 2005 Jul 20, 2006
Kathleen Sachse
Burke\Springfield\Fairfax

Patricia Lynn "Patti" Schmid
Jul 22, 1967 Dec 17, 1995
Stuart and Sharon Schmid
Arlington

Darnell Smith Jr.
Sep 14, 1980 Jul 26, 2001
Darnell and Tanya Smith, Sr.
DC

Adam Christopher Smoot
Jul 23, 1978 Apr 12, 2003
Lynn Burwitz
Prince William

Erin Stanfield
Apr 18, 1985 Jul 14, 2002
Jack and Susan Stanfield
Burke\Springfield\Fairfax

Kenneth John "Kenny" Sutton
Jul 10, 1964 Aug 01, 1999
Joan Sutton
Arlington

Marc Gordon Thomas
Jul 12, 1974 Jul 29, 1995
Gordon and Baerbel Thomas
Arlington

Benjamin Keith Valois
Jul 15, 1973 Dec 05, 2001
Judith Valois
Arlington

Alyssa Jane Weishoff
Sep 30, 1992 Jul 12, 2005
Lisa and Fred Weisssoff
Prince William

David Yoo
Jul 16, 1980 Aug 18, 1999
Karen Yoo
Arlington



It's Always Just Right There

Eleven years ago, in January of 1987, my thirteen-year-old son Jeremy lost his life in a car crash. As with all parents who jump instantly into that category we gently call “bereaved”, my life changed forever. Now over a decade has passed and I continue to reflect on the things that have indeed changed and those that have remained pretty much the same.

My reaction to other parents who have children has changed over the years. I still envy them, of course, but time has tempered my feelings. After all, Jeremy would be twenty-five this year, perhaps with a young family of his own (as his younger sister has done). Who knows? I can only imagine what he might look like now. But the sharp pain has eased a little - the realization that used to almost make me physically wince-when it would hit me that I would never see him graduate from high school or college, or walk down the aisle with his bride. I can sit through a wedding now; at first I couldn't do that.

After eleven years, though, something has remained as constant as the sun and moon in the sky. It's hard to put into words, really, but if I were a betting man I would wager that each and every grieving parent knows what I'm attempting to describe. It isn't just one feeling that we could label as pain, or grief, or loss, or even devastation. If there was a word for it, maybe the closest one would be something like ache.

We all get headaches and stomachaches and so we're all familiar with this idea on the physical level. This is different although sometimes it does feel like a tightening of my chest or my throat. But this is a deeper ache, one that sometimes grips my whole being. In the early years after Jeremy's death, I would have “grief attacks” that could range from sadness and melancholy to full-blown periods of tears, rage, and anguish. Those have subsided for the most part, but that ache always seems to be nearby.

I have a dear friend at work, also a bereaved parent, and sometimes when our eyes meet, in the cafeteria or in the hallway, I know instantly that the ache for her son is “always right there” too. There are times when I just have to give her a hug so that she knows that I know, and it helps both of us.

There is no cure for this ache. Has life gotten better? Certainly, in many ways. I have much to be thankful for and to remain the least bit sane, I need to have that “attitude of gratitude,” there is no doubt about this whatsoever. But if someone told me that I will have this ache that is going to “hang around” for the remainder of my life, I wouldn't be surprised. I loved Jeremy as much as any parent could ever love a child, and now he is gone. And even after eleven years, there is a certain feeling that is always just right there.

Jon Pederson TCF, Sacramento Valley

Lovingly listed from Atlanta Online Sharing

EDITOR'S NOTE:

It has now been 20 years since Jon's son Jeremy died, and I feel that he would probably say today, “It's always just right there”.