 **July-August 2020**

**Chapter Leader: Theresa Phillips TCF National Headquarters**

# 24-Hour Help Line: (816)229-2640 PO Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522

**Private Facebook Page: Eastern Jackson County TCF Website: www.compassionatefriends.org**

**Website: www.easternjacksoncounty tcf.org 630-990-0010**

**Riding the Beast**

In grieving the loss of our child, we ride a wild, screaming beast. Suddenly, out of nowhere, we are forced to mount and ride until the day we reach the end of our own lives. The beast is a frightening, ugly, apocalyptic horse - a raging, unrelenting atomic animal. We cannot get a grip, no matter how we try to cope, rationalize, or pray. We wonder where and how our lives came to be like this. What happened? How is it that we were going merrily along (more or less) in life and now, in one fell swoop, we are attached to this beast forever? No matter how much this monster bucks or how high it rears its black mane, we cannot fall off. Occasionally we feel that the animal might quiet, but at any moment it may also try to throw us with a vengeance as (if not more) forceful as before. We know that even as it tries, we cannot be dislodged. We are bound with straps that are as unbreakable as the love that bonds us to our child in the first place; a love forged before our child was conceived. We have no choice; the beast must be ridden just as the work of grief must be done. It is only when we are able to guide the beast to the final stable that we will be reunited with our child and our Creator. Until then, we must continue to ride.

*-- By John Harris,~reprinted from Orlando, FL Chapter of TCF Newsletter May/June 2005*

**Falling Apart**

I seem to be falling apart. My attention span can be measured in seconds. I cry at the drop of a hat. I forget things constantly. The morning toast burns daily. I forget to sign the checks. Half of everything in the house is misplaced. Feelings of anxiety and restlessness are my constant companions. Rainy days seem extra dreary. Sunny days seem an outrage. Other people’s pain and frustration seem insignificant. Laughing, happy people seem out of place in my world. It has become routine to feel half crazy. I am told I am normal. I am a newly grieving person.

*-- By Eloise Cole*



Let warm memories

Be as close to you

As the warmth of summer

**A Father's Grief**

I never believed I would see another season change with gladness.

I never believed I would see the world again without the haze of tears.

I never expected to actually laugh again.

I never felt my smile would return and feel natural on my face.

I never hoped my smile would return and feel natural on my face.

I never hoped for another day when I would not want to die.

I never envisioned a world that could again be bright and full of promise.

I believed that all that had passed from me the day he died and went away, never to return.

But I was wrong, and I know that in the fullness of your grieving, you, too, will come to understand that life goes on - that it can still have meaning - that even joy can touch your life once more.

*By Don Hackett   
TCF, Hingham, MA   
~reprinted from The Goshen/Middlebury Area Chapter of TCF*

The child who owns this summer is not here,

not here to know the wealthy summer wind,

not here to share the glowing and the song.

The child who owns this summer did not live,

not live to touch the richness of this day,

this day in summer when you are alone.

Cry to the summerwind

Cry, and behold the child

You remember. *--Sascha*

**Silence**

I am the “I”

Invisible

Sounds so fragile

Now breakable

Words around me

But not to me

I want to listen

But just can’t be.

Friends around me

Are pulling back.

I’m not sure why.

Seems feelings lack?

Now they see me,

They seem to care.

They love to talk.

They love to share.

A club they’ve formed.

Their lives now full

Of love and life

So beautiful.

Now together

They seem to be

Now all alone

It’s sad it’s me.

My life is silent.

I’m just not there

I live in darkness.

I just don’t care.

A father’s gone.

I just feel lost.

I wish for words

At any cost.

By Don Batson

**August**

This summer runs to harvest—Do you ask

How could a harvest be without my child?

Friend, some day soon

the harvest in your life

will bring you home and wealth,

from love remembered.

Summer Breezes

There’s a hint of girlish laughter

Wafting past the porch.

For a moment I pause to listen.

In the warmth of summer sun

Memories are to bask in.

Trees you climbed, kites you flew,

Bikes you raced,

Waves you splashed in.

At night we wrapped time around us

As we blanketed the grass

And gazed toward heaven.

The stars were full of wonder then,

And lazy days seemed endless.

Life spread before you,

Laughter filling the wind with happiness.

Just now I thought I heard you

once again.

How pleasant this breath of summer,

The breezes hold such memories

Of life, of you.

*--Karen Nelson, Box Elder County, UT*

**When It Is Dark Enough,**

**You Can See the Stars**

Often it is easiest to see the stars in the long, cold nights of winter. People who have come through any kind of life-threatening event—a crash, a tornado, a severe illness, the loss of a loved one—speak of how it has changed their perspective, how it’s easier to see what’s important.

Several years after our daughter died, we experienced a burglary. All of our wedding silver was stolen, as well as antique pieces that had been handed down through many generations. Of course, we were upset. But right away the words came to me: “It’s only things.” I have no way of knowing whether or not I’d have been this calm if the theft occurred before her death, but I suspect not.

The stars are not only clearer, but more beautiful. Ancient navigators found their way through the seas by looking at the stars. So maybe the experience of loss not only helps clarify what is important to us, but also helps us know where we are and the direction in which we want to go.

*--Charles Beard*

**July’s Child**

Fireworks race toward heaven

Brilliant colors in the sky.

Their splendor ends in seconds

On this evening in July.

“Her birthday is this Saturday,”

I whisper with a sigh.

She was born this month,

She loved this month,

And she chose this month to die.

Like the bright and beautiful fireworks

Glowing briefly in the dark

They are gone too soon, and so was she—

Having been, and left her mark,

A glorious, incandescent life.

A catalyst, a spark…

Her being gently lit my path

And softened all things stark.

The July birth, the July death

Of my happy summer child

Marked a life too brief that ended

Without rancor, without guile.

Like the fireworks that leave images

On unprotected eyes…

Her lustrous life engraved my heart…

With love that never dies.

*--Sally Migliaccio, Long Island, NY*

**The Sun Will Shine**

I sat in the darkness in the living room, for dawn was only just arriving. Through the picture window I watched the trees slowly outline the opposite shore of our little lake. Then magically, a warm shaft of light appeared behind the trees, flooding the horizon with gold. “It will be a beautiful day for our picnic,” I thought.

But as the daylight grew stronger, I saw that a thick, gray fog blanketed the lake and the lawn between it and the house. “Oh, no,” I moaned, “I was so hoping for good weather.” Then a ball of fire peeked over the horizon and rose majestically into full view. Within an hour it had burned off the mist, and the picnic day emerged bright and clear under the cloudless sky.

Life is like this, I thought, when grief … darkens our days. It is then we must keep hope burning in our hearts. We must believe that if the sun is not shining at the moment, it will shine again, and we will have a richer appreciation of the bright days for having experienced the darkness.

*--Madeline Robinson, Twin Lakes WI*

***From Sascha Wagner:***

**Summer Soon…**

Sunlight dancing on the branches

Of the birch tree at my door.

Meadow stretching smug and lazy,

Darker, greener than before.

Wind as warm as hugging children,

Clouds so round and very close--

And on one small grave there trembles

Lovingly an early rose.

***Summerwind***

*The one who owns this summer is not here,*

*not here to know the tender summerwind,*

*not here to share the glowing and the song.*

*The one who owns this summer did not live*

*to touch the richness of this day,*

*this day in summer when you are alone.*

*Weep to the summer wind,*

*weep and love again*

*the one you remember.*

**When you walk through a storm,**

**keep your head up high**

**And don’t be afraid of the dark,**

**At the end of the storm is a golden sky**

**And the sweet silver song of a lark.**

**Walk on through the wind,**

**Walk on through the rain,**

**Though your dreams be tossed and blown.**

**Walk on, walk on,**

**with hope in your heart,**

**And you’ll never walk alone…**

**You’ll never walk alone.**

*--“You’ll Never Walk Alone”*

*by Oscar Hammerstein II*

**Beach Havens**

As the tide of grief goes down,

New beaches are revealed.

Their sand, it’s true, is wet,

And barnacles protrude.

But wear your rubber shoes

(hot pink would be preferred).

Step dainty on the shore:

A storm-thrown log will give you rest.

Now sit and sun yourself,

And dream of those you love.

*--Cathy Sosnowsky, TCF*

*North Shore, North Vancouver BC*

Accept me as I am

grieving, pained.

empty, lonely

Just love me

and allow me to feel

what I must feel.

One day I will begin to heal--

I know not when.

Don’t be afraid of me—

It is still me.

Struggling to find

myself—outside

of this pain. Please

just be my friend.

*--Marilyn Henderson,*

*TCF Pacific Northwest*

**In My Pocket**

I have memories in my pocket.

They rattle just like change.

My memories of you are treasures

I carry wherever I go.

They are stored in bits and pieces,

parts of a beautiful whole.

They give me comfort

when I think I am alone.

Yes, I have memories in my pocket,

like so much other stuff I keep there.

But of all the treasure I have,

it’s the memories of you

that are the most precious.

*--Martin Baer, TCF North Shore-Boston*

**The Miracle of You**

Who could have known the exquisite difference

Your brief life would make upon mine?

Who could have known a tiny baby would

Show me the beauty of a sunrise,

Or the wonder of a rainbow,

or the pain of a tear?

Who would have known that an innocent little child

Would take away my fear of death

and point me in the direction of Heaven?

Who could have known that you

would succeed where so many others

have failed?

*--Dana Gensler, TCF, South Center KY*

**River With One Stone**

*By Pat O'Donnell*

That day our world consisted of small differences and distinctions determined by the particular place we sat in this river transporter of rubber and air. My chosen seat was in back to better safeguard the little one at the beak of the boat. My mind tells me it was only yesterday when I saw the look that questioned my decision and said how come you won't be next to me? How could I explain that I loved him so much that I would sacrifice sight of laughter on his face to make sure he was ok? Better to be behind the precious one in guardian mode for a Dad that was worried about coming walls of water washing this perfection from Dad's loving eyes. That would never happen, would never be allowed and a father's fear of his own demise was no barrier to any effort to protect this most special love from real harm. Real harm was inconceivable, unacceptable.

Our memories were together on the shore looking at this river that flirted with our toes. It was cold as the kind you want on the hottest summer day. It was clear to the bottom of its center. Harmless moving fishy colors occasionally cast shadows on the brilliant gold's and whites of the pebble bottom that decorated the depths of this calmly forever-moving liquid path. We would leave this river of life only briefly. The shore was not our home on this journey. On occasion our adventure encouraged brief heat relieving respites from our watery friend to gain perspective on our trip from a different view. To rest and observe the river of our destiny could provide great insight into the bigger picture. And it was fun. Our skin absorbed rays of light and in small proportions this felt good. The warmth was contrasted with the water at our feet. Shapes and sounds and colors were gloriously in place and there was great comfort in the reassuring order of this world as we splashed back into our raft and its river road. Our waterway was always there, always holding our past and future in timeless travel for a father and son in a lifetime voyage to our destiny.

We left our river that day but kept momentous memories forever tucked away in father and son time. Adventures continued but on different paths as souls find their own way. One day it was time to reenter our adventure and travel back to the river, our river. This time I heard only one splash. And it was mine. Looking back on the shore there was the solitary figure waving, smiling, and speaking without being heard from the shore that was now his home. See you soon was the song but my tears on the river was the only sound I could hear. The current had a hold of me and all of my fatherly strength could not stop the inevitable. My little friend was not alone and his smile showed great happiness. There was great peace all around him as he bathed in familiarity. He was ok. My tears were as plentiful as my screams but deafening silence was the response to my pleadings. My being was numb as exhaustion claimed victory over the powerless in this unfair fight. In an instant the journey had changed forever. In an instant the lesson of Love was taught in this river with the shore that was not mine, not yet.

And so another day is noted where the sun shines only briefly. Another night is endured when the moon is buried behind dark shadows. The day is singularly sad and so is the man though no one sees. Strangers, family or friends are not supposed to spy even a hint of the man and the tragic baggage attached to him by the death of a child. Suffer in silence is the motto passed from generation to generation. There is not enough time for the luxury of grief. There is money to be made or beasts to be slayed. Food and shelter must be gained and provided. Life goes on. Happy Father’s Day hurts so very much but no one knows because no one is supposed to see the heartache deeply buried in masculine moist eyes. The painful expressions stay in the private closet that Dad has built for his tears.

On Father’s Day, On Mother’s Day, on Birthdays, on most every day there is a profound sad loneliness locked in memories that sometimes escape their storage area. Still floating in the river, still leaving to walk on a shore and look out into forests, and mountains, and empty land for the son that travels no more in this river. Sometimes, on occasion, I know I see him, if only for an instant, just as I last saw him so long ago on the river with one shore and he is just as perfect as ever. Now I sit in the front of the air and rubber raft and my most precious child sits in the back. Someday we will sit side by side.

**Vacations After Loss**

Vacations bring to mind time we spent as a family. After the death of a child, vacations—especially the first ones after loss—remind us of their absence.

Some bereaved parents place a higher expectation on the vacation than can be fulfilled. Mom may assume that getting away from home and the stress of work will enable Dad & other family members to talk about their loss, recalling memories together and resolving issues of their grief. Dad might be thinking, “If we can just get away from all these memories and stress, we can relax and forget our pain.” It’s not uncommon to discover one spouse may not be ready to talk yet.

It would be good for each family member to express their expectations for vacation, their fears, and other factors so that the family can have an idea of what everyone is expecting before they take off. It will be less frustrating for everyone if they know the time will not ALL be devoted to one person’s expectations. Knowing that some time may be set aside for grief work, some for Dad and Mom’s relaxation, and some for other family members’ enjoyment, will make it less stressful for everyone.

If vacations usually include trips to relatives or family camps, seeing everyone after your loss can be bittersweet. Memories as well as what you’d planned for your child to do flood your mind. Some people will want to talk about your child. If your trip occurs shortly after the funeral, you may find that talking about your child is like dragging the funeral out for days. When several months have elapsed, others often feel uncomfortable and will not mention your child’s name until you do. If you want to talk about your child, don’t wait for others to bring up his/her name. They’re uncertain if you’re comfortable talking about him/her, so are waiting for you to make the first move.

Many find the enthusiasm to plan vacations and the concentration to make detailed arrangements are gone early in their grief, the first year especially. Others feel too stressed out to go anywhere or are afraid that coming home would be too painful. In that case, day outings might be more suited to your energy and enthusiasm levels. Try to choose a variety of things so that each member of the family can do something they enjoy.

Some bereaved parents may fear getting too far from home and the mementos that remind them of their precious child. Various fears, some irrational, may make thoughts of a vacation too painful to consider. In such a case, it would be good to try to define these fears. Just realizing what the fear pertains to helps you deal with it. If fear is a problem with any member of the family, it would be good to make a list of what they are afraid of, then calmly discuss these fears with someone. If it’s too stressful to discuss them within the immediate family, ask a trusted friend or pastor to discuss them with you. Just getting them out in the open and identified will help immeasurably.

Many recently bereaved people find that too much free time allows more time for painful remembrances than they welcome, **so it’s important to be flexible** and willing to change plans midway through the vacation, if it’s agreeable with the majority of the family.

Discuss the pros and cons of visiting a familiar or a new place, to decide what each family member feels most comfortable with. Remember grief depletes your energy levels, so you’ll tire more quickly. Take this into consideration when planning reasonable distances to be driven daily. Bereaved people need exercise, but if you’re planning to hike or do other strenuous exercise, don’t forget your energy levels are not the same as they were before your child’s death. Exhaustion and disappointment with your capabilities (thus frustration) will come much sooner than previously. Whether you leave town or stay home, remember **working through grief is the hardest work you’ll ever do.** Be kind to yourself and allow time to re-energize your own depleted reserves.

As in other family matters, **communication is very important.** No one else can read your mind and be able to fulfill your unexpressed expectations. For a vacation to be refreshing for everyone, good communication will be one of the most important factors. You may have been planning a very special vacation and wonder if you should take it so soon after your loss. You might consider waiting another year so you can enjoy it more with less “grief baggage” than you are carrying now. Or you may feel that since you have been anticipating it for so long, to put it off would just be another loss added to your child’s death. **Only you can decide.** If you can’t decide peaceably, that’s an indication you won’t enjoy it as much now as you most likely would in a year or two.

As with everything else after loss, the first vacation will be the most challenging. It’s all new with that huge absence every present. It would be nice if a vacation were an opportunity for you to escape your pain or leave it behind at home, but the fact is, **everywhere that love goes, grief goes too!** We grieve because we love. As time passes, vacations won’t be edged with as much pain. Someday you will find one enjoyable again.

*--Carol Ruth Blackman*



**Fireworks Are Like the Love in Our Hearts**

July brings central Oregonians lingering blue skies, lazy afternoons and the Fourth of July celebration, complete with the grand fireworks finale bolting from the top of Pilot Butte. This was one of my son’s favorite holidays. When he was six, I asked him why fireworks were so special to him. He said, “The lights explode in the dark and make the whole sky light up! The fireworks are like the love in our hearts. We should always try to spread our love out to others.”

Profound wisdom comes from the lips of children! From that summer on, in my mind, fireworks have been a triumphant testament of love’s enduring power and wonder. I miss my son, Joshua, terribly. I comfort myself knowing that his wisdom and kindness were precious gifts in my life.

Wherever you are on the Fourth of July, I hope that the splendor of sparkling fireworks comforts you and reminds you that the love you hold for your child is the light that is able to shine through you, for others.

We all have known grief well, yet as Compassionate Friends, we need not walk alone in the darkness. We can lighten the path for each other. Life can cripple and destroy us, but when we gather to share each other’s burdens, we are able to gain strength. Love for our children is our common flame; sharing and caring keep the flame alive.

###### --Jane Oja, TCF Central Oregon Chapter

**I Still Love**

She brought me red roses tonight, the ones she knew I loved. I thanked her silently and watched as she sat against the nearest tree. She looked past me up toward the twilight sky. Her mouth was slightly smiling. Yet she had tears in her eyes. Her one hand tucked her auburn hair behind her ear and her other hand was twirling the grass between her fingers. She shivered a little and I wished I had my jacket to give her, a hand to comfort her. I wanted to tell her I loved her again, but it was as futile as trying to make roses grow in the dark. I wanted to kiss away the tears that were now streaming down her upturned face. I wanted things like before, when the world could make her laugh. She held one more rose, the most beautiful one, the one that had bloomed in her hand. She walked through the vacant space between her and me. I smiled in wonder as she tried to wipe away her tears. With a shaking hand she let down the final rose upon my grave and made her way toward the setting sun.

*--Alysa Mayer in memory of Keith*

**The Gift of Someone Who Listens**

Those of us who have traveled a while

Along this path called grief

Need to stop and remember that mile—

The first mile of no relief.

It wasn’t the person with answers

Who told us of ways to deal

It wasn’t the one who talked and talked

That helped us start to heal.

Think of the friends who quietly sat

And held our hands in theirs.

The ones who let us talk and talk

And hugged away our tears.

We need to always remember

That more than the words we speak,

It’s the gift of someone who listens\

That most of us desperately seek.

*--Nancy Myerholts, Waterville/Toledo TCF*

Dandelions and Grass

Dandelions and grass

Clasped in a chubby hand,

Starry-eyed, so pleased with himself,

Never a bouquet so grand;

Slightly wilted, with drooping leaves,

Received as the rarest of blooms.

In my best vase on a cloth of lace

They proudly graced my rooms.

In the years to come, that same hand Wrote a lovely poem,

Built a model airplane

And played the saxophone,

But ever in this mother’s heart

In all the years that passed,

The loveliest thing that David gave

Was dandelions and grass.

*--Joy C. Worland*

###### The Promise

Your birth brought me starshine,

the moon and the sun;

my wishes, dreams gathered

‘round my little one.

My life became sacred,

full of promise and light,

all wrapped in the girl-child

bringing love at first sight.

The years of your living,

filled with laughter and tears

excitement, adventure,

some boredom, some fears,

but ended too quickly,

ahead of its time.

The loss so horrendous

such heartbreak was mine.

But from the beginning,

one thought rose so clear;

never would your death erase

the years you were here.

I would not be defeated

or diminished by your death;

I would hang on, learn to conquer,

if it took my every breath.

For if your death destroyed my life,

made both our lives a waste,

it would deny your life’s meaning\

and all the love you gave.

I vowed that years of sadness

would change, with work and grace,

to years of happiness, even joy,

in which you’d have a place.

Memories of you, like shining stars

in the patterns of my soul,

are beacons flashing light and love,

and with them I am whole.

In your honor, I live my life,\

now living it for two.

Through all my life, you too will live,

You lived…you live…you do.

*--Genesse Boudrea Gentry,*

*Stars in the Deepest Night: After the Death of a Child*

**Sometimes**

Sometimes

Memories are like rain showers

Sparkling down upon you

Catching you unaware

And then they are gone

Leaving you warm and refreshed

Sometimes

Memories are like thunderstorms

Beating down upon you

Relentless in their downpour

Leaving you tired and bruised

Sometimes

Memories are like shadows

Sneaking up behind you

Following you around

Then they disappear

Leaving you sad and confused

Sometimes

Memories are like comforters

Surrounding you with warmth

Luxuriously abundant

And sometimes they stay

Wrapping you in contentment

*-- Marcia Updyke*

**Freedom Is Not Free**

I watched the flag pass by one day.

It fluttered in the breeze.

A young Marine saluted it, and then he stood at ease.

I looked at him in uniform So young, so tall, so proud

With hair cut square and eyes alert

He’d stand out in any crowd.

I thought, how many men like him

Had fallen through the years?

How many died on foreign soil? How many mothers’ tears?

How many pilots’ planes shot down?

How many foxholes were soldiers’ graves?

No, Freedom is not free.

I heard the sound of taps one night

When everything was still.

I listened to the bugler play and felt a sudden chill.

I wondered just how many times

that taps had meant “Amen”

when a flag had draped a coffin of a brother or a friend.

I thought of all the children,

Of the mothers and the wives,

Of fathers, sons and husbands with interrupted lives.

I thought about a graveyard at the bottom of the sea,

Of unmarked graves in Arlington.

No, Freedom isn’t free!!

by Kelly Strong

***Mark your calendars for our Annual Walk to Remember on September 26, 2020 at Waterfall Park in Independence, MO.***

**Remember when you came to your first meeting and someone was there who was a little farther down the road and gave you a hug or shared something that made you feel like you are not crazy. Well if you are a little bit farther down the road please feel free to come back to our meetings and help families that are just starting their grief journey.**

# Love Gifts

**Please help us help others. Make a LOVE GIFT today**. **Tax deductible Love Gifts may be sent to: TCF C/O Theresa Phillips 6200 Kentucky Ave, Raytown, MO 64133**

*For Remembrance dates please visit our website at* [*www.easternjacksoncountytcf.org*](http://www.easternjacksoncountytcf.org)

*Find us on Facebook at* [*https://www.facebook.com/groups/1582699755290182*](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1582699755290182)

*We have several volunteers who write remembrance cards to families on birthdays and death dates. Just a reminder if you have an address change please email* [*phillipsplace@aol.com*](mailto:phillipsplace@aol.com) *or mail a note to TCF, C/O Theresa Phillips 6200 Kentucky Raytown, MO 64133 so the roster can be updated.*

*Please remember that you can give to The Compassionate Friends through your United Way pledge at work or as a single gift, but you MUST WRITE IT IN.*