

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS INC. International Organization
Offering Friendship and Understanding to Bereaved Parents
MIAMI COUNTY CHAPTER NO. 1870
JUNE 2017 NEWSLETTER Vol. 26 No. 5

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**Mark Your Calendars &
Reserve a Butterfly for
Your Child!**

**Don't miss our 2nd Annual
Butterfly Release & Picnic
July 20, 2017 Nashville UCC
Picnic Grounds**

Come join us for a peaceful evening with family and friends. Everyone is welcome so don't come alone! Look for the balloons marking the gravel drive that will take you back to the picnic area. It is located a short distance west of the church, on the north side of St. Rt. 571. We'll be using the covered shelter where there are plenty of picnic tables and benches. For comfort, you may want to bring along folding chairs so you can sit under the trees where it might be cooler.



We provide plates, napkins, dinnerware, condiments, cups, drinks and ice. A variety of meat selections will be provided. Everyone is asked to bring a salad, vegetable, fruit dish, or a dessert to share with the group and include a serving utensil. (If you are going to bring a store-bought item, please consider a salad or vegetable as we generally have a good number of homemade desserts.) -- Don't forget to bring your child's picture for the photo table.

Members enjoyed our last year butterfly release so much, we will again release butterflies for our children. There will be one butterfly for each child that has passed

June Meeting—May 22, 2017

7:00 P.M.

Nashville United Church of Christ

4540 W. St. Rt. 571, West Milton, Ohio

Meetings are held in the basement of the church. Please park in the lot on the west side of the building. Enter the building Through the door facing the west parking lot.

Topic: Grief's Emotional Roller Coaster

Guest Speaker: Rev. Bobbie Predmore

The many emotions of grief and its affects on your life.

June Refreshments:

Cindy & Steve Glaser (Memory of Andy)
Call Deb 667-4761 to help with June

Thank you for May Refreshments

Kim Bundy (Memory of Randy)
John & Roberta Back (Memory of Jessica)

for the whole family to release. The order for the butterflies need to be submitted by July 7th. **Please RSVP no later than July 1st** to Barb Lawrence (937) 836-5939 or email barb.lawrence1961@gmail.com (Please provide your child's name, your name, phone number, and the number attending for this child.)

For those that would like to continue with our traditional balloon release, you are most welcome to bring your own balloon and send it up to heaven with your messages after the butterflies are released.

SEE YOU AT THE PICNIC!!



DEATH OF A CHILD: WHAT'S IT LIKE AT 10 YEARS?

January 11, 2002 ... Ten years? Sometimes it seems like yesterday. Sometimes it seems like it never happened. Most of the time it is somewhere in between.

*[EDITOR'S NOTE: Rich Edler, 58, past president of TCF's national board, author of *Into the Valley and Out Again* and treasured friend to many in TCF's extended family, died suddenly and unexpectedly on February 16. He had completed this article for *We Need Not Walk Alone*, TCF's national magazine, just over a month earlier.]*

It has been 10 years today since Mark died.

When I wrote *Into the Valley and Out Again* I chronicled first one day, then one week, then the first month and year. Now it is 10. Here are my thoughts:

The hurt never goes away. We never forget. We never get over it. We don't want to. We hurt so much because we loved so much. But the focus on death and the event fades and the warmth of good memories replaces it. Oh, we can still go back there in an instant. Back to the call, the moment, the good-bye. Back to the night that will forever separate our life between "before" and "after." But we now go back less and less. Time helps a lot.

I have fewer friends. Better friends, mind you, but fewer. I am out of the circle now. My Rolodex is cold. My networking, which used to be razor sharp, has atrophied. My power lunches have become tuna fish sandwiches. But the amazing thing is how much I don't care. I miss some special people so I go out of my way to stay in touch. And that is enough.

I have new and different priorities. I move through life a little slower, a little more tuned to life around me, and to life gone too soon. I brake for sunsets. I hurt for the people who share this walk with me. Since Mark died, hundreds and then thousands of children have died. I feel for them and for their families in a way I could never have understood before. I value people more than things, moments more than milestones and I no longer equate what I do with who I am.

I am not having the life I expected to have. I recall an old saying, "Man plans ... God laughs." Dennis Prager, an author and Los Angeles radio talk-show host, said that unhappiness equals image minus reality. What he meant is that you are unhappy when your image of where you should be is dramatically different from where you really are.

When a child dies, the reality of the life we are going to have is altered forever. I am no longer going to be Mark's dad. I am no longer going to join him at UCLA football games. I am no longer going to be a grandfather to the children he will never have. If that gap between image and reality is a recipe for unhappiness, well, then the reverse is also true. If you "solve" the equation of happiness, happiness equals image matched closely with reality. So I have had to change my image to match the new reality.

I like my new life better. This makes me feel guilty because I would trade my life in an instant if I could have Mark back. But I really do like the person I have become since Mark died. I don't even know that person from 10 years ago. Back then my life purpose was to run a large advertising agency. Today, it is to give back in gratitude for the joy of the life I have been given. I want to make Mark proud. I want to be a blessing to others. And I want to enjoy the journey, too. I still have a grief that goes unspoken. Who will listen at 10 years? Yes, I still miss Mark. But I miss him quietly and silently. I grieve for his loss; for the loss of the person he would have become (he would be 28 now, but instead is forever 18); and also for the loss of the life I would be having if he were here.

I have an overwhelming sense of gratitude. I have been blessed beyond measure. I have a surviving son who has given me more joy than I could imagine any parent having ... and now a beautiful daughter-in-law, and a granddaughter. Gratitude is one of the most helpful and healing things you can do on your grief journey. And with gratitude comes thanks. So in gratitude, Kitty and I made a list this week of the people who were there for us when we needed them most. These are the people who dropped everything in their lives on a moment's phone call and rushed to our side. These are the people with whom we are joined forever, and who, no matter how far they drift, or what unimportant spats we might have, will always have a special place in our heart. You make your own list. Then find those people wherever they are, and say thank you.

I choose joy over sadness. If there is one overriding thought in these years, including 10 TCF conferences in a row, it is simply this: Grief is inevitable; misery is optional. It does no good to sit in a hole. It does no good for the loss of one life to lead to the loss of two.

What *does* do good is doing good. To decide to lead the second part of your life *differently and better* than you would have before ... in your child's name. When we do that ... when we do one small act of kindness we never would have done before ... when we reach out to other bereaved parents because we can and because we have been there ... then the world is changed in some small way for the better, and then the actions we take become a living tribute to our child's life. And then that child is never entirely gone.

And that, my fellow compassionate friends, is how it looks at 10 years for me.

Rich Edler , TCF South Bay, CA
In Memory of my son Mark Edler
Spring 2002, *We Need Not Walk Alone*
Reprinted with permission

For your
Thank you
love gifts!

- ♦ Ralph & Vera McLean for the Birthday Love Gift in memory of their son, Antonio McLean 06/1972 -- 04/2003.
- ♦ Ken & Betty Quinn for the Anniversary Love Gift in memory of their son, Kyle Quinn 12/1994 -- 05/2014.

Love Gifts should be made out to:

The Compassionate Friends and mailed to Barb Lawrence, 4031 Wolcott Place, Englewood, OH 45322. Please send your donation by the 15th of the month prior to the month you want your child remembered in the newsletter.

OUR BUTTERFLIES

--By Marilyn Futrell

We are weary caterpillars
 Awash on life's tide.
 Little do we realize
 There's a butterfly inside.

Our feet solidly on the ground
 The earth, it holds our eye.
 It's hard to imagine
 That one day we will fly.

While we mourn our children's loss
 They fly freely up above.
 Floating free and peacefully
 On breezes of God's love.

Their wings an iridescent glow.
 Their bodies are pure light.
 And somewhere choirs of angels sang
 The moment they took flight.

They live in joy and happiness
 And peace we cannot know.
 We can only bide our time
 And await our time to go.

But one day we will join them
 And together we will fly.
 Then we will have forgotten
 We ever said good-bye.

In memory of Marilyn's son,
 John Robert (J.R.) Woodfin
 The Heart of Florida Chapter

CHAPTER NEWS

Upcoming Topics:

July - Annual Picnic & Butterfly Release

August - Journaling & Your Child's Acrostic Poem. Pam Fortener, facilitator.

September - Secondary Losses Experiences

Editor's Note: *If there is anyone that would be interested providing articles for the Sibling Page, please contact Cathy Duff at : mcduff79@windstream.net or call 937-473-5533*

The 40th TCF National Conference

The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that Orlando, Florida, will be the site of the 40th TCF National Conference on July 28-30, 2017. "Rays of Sunshine, Oceans of Hope" is the theme of next year's event, which promises more of this year's great National Conference experience. The 2017 Conference will be held at the Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek. For registration and workshop details proceed to the national website at:

www.compassionatefriends.org.

Plan to be a part of this heartwarming experience.

Pre-registration will be available until July 7, 2017. Please note: while on-site conference registration will be available, the Friday lunch and Saturday dinner is only available with pre-registration.

NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE?

A listening ear is sometimes the best medicine.

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| Kim Bundy (suicide) | 573-9877 |
| Lori Clark (organ donation) | 233-1924 |
| Pam Fortener (cancer death) | 254-1222 |
| Sheryll Hedger (siblings) | 997-5171 |
| Lora Rudy (infant death) | 339-0456 |
| Cathy Duff (auto accident) | 473-5533 |

This Father's Loss

By Mike Herman

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Smashwords Edition

That Sunday is a day I'll remember as long as I have a conscious thought. It's the day I learned my son had been killed.

It was the Sunday before Thanksgiving in 1982. We had gone out for breakfast and, our weekly trip to the grocery. As we came down the street we saw a car sitting in the driveway. When we got in front of the house we recognized it as the car belonging to the couple who had rented a house to me from August 1978 to July 1982. In that period of time we had become friends with them, but they had never been to our house in Beavercreek, Ohio, so we weren't expecting them and we were surprised to see their car.

Paula's son, Dave, had let them in, so when we went into the dinning room they were sitting at the table with serious looks on their faces. After the usual pleasantries we sat down, and I asked them what was going on. They very haltingly told me my youngest son, Jeff, had been killed sometime during the previous 24 hours. They didn't have all the details, but they did know he had been murdered. I sat there totally stunned, completely at a loss for words.

They said the reason they were the ones notified by the police was because the house I had rented from them was the only place of residence on record for me. They also said they couldn't bear the thought of me having to hear such tragic news from a stranger so they told the police they would inform me.

Jeff was killed just a few days before his 19th birthday, which happened to be Paula's sister's birthday, and he was buried on Paula's birthday.

Not that it matters, but Paula and I weren't married then, (we married the following year), and I have always been grateful that she was not Jeff's mother. I'm not sure I could've survived emotionally, if I had to watch the woman I love suffer the pain and anguish I was feeling.

My mother passed away Oct. 16, 1981, and I know there really isn't an easy time to lose a loved one, but a short year later seemed far too soon to lose another. Although I was 44 years old when Jeff died, I told Paula I wished my mother was there, because it seems like when the rough times hit the hardest is when you want to lean on your mother the most. But, after thinking about it I was relieved she didn't have to be there to see me go through it *again*.

I say again, because my youngest daughter, Mary, ended her own life on July 14, 1978, one day after her 17th birthday, and my mother was at my side suffering through it with me then.

My father died when I was eight years old, and being an only child, my mother was very protective of me, so I don't know what it would have done to her to see me go through it a second time.

The fact that Mary and Jeff, both were very intelligent and good looking, really isn't relevant. They were children, whose lives had barely begun, but more importantly to me, they were *my* children.

Before that time when I had heard about or read some of the devastating stories of another family's losses I felt sympathy and tried to think how terrible it must be for them.

Each time it happened to me, it was no longer a story. It became *my* life, and I didn't want sympathy. I wanted it to not be true, and for that awful pain to go away. To this day I could not tell you how any other parent survives the loss of one child let alone two. The only way I know to describe my feelings is; when you lose someone you love, whether it's a family member or a friend, it creates a hole in your emotional heart, as well as your life, and no other person or thing will ever fill that hole. So, in order for us to survive the losses, we have to learn how to live with those holes.

Looking at my own situation, it's easy to understand how a person can just give up on life and end their own after such a loss. I guess the hole is just, too, big for them and they don't feel they can survive it. I know one of the reasons I've been able to live with the holes in my life is because of the support and love I got from my friends and family.

In the early 1970's, four of my children (including Mary and Jeff) were crouching in the hallway of their home as an extremely powerful tornado destroyed that house along with half of the city of Xenia, Ohio. Without realizing it, once I knew they were safe and had survived the worst that would ever happen to them, I think, I felt a false sense of security...then Mary died.

Some time after Jeff's death Paula told me that while I was going through the initial grieving over him, she was afraid she had lost the Mike she knew. I think it was because I really felt like I was blind-sided, since after Mary died it never even entered my mind that it would be possible for it to happen again.

As Jeff's funeral concluded a young girl in a light blue dress, who looked to be in her late teens or early twenties was crying as she walked toward me. When she got to me she reached out and hugged me. I responded by hanging on to her and sobbing harder than I remember ever having done so before. To this day I don't know who she was, but I'm assuming she was a friend of my son.

Since that time I don't doubt for one minute that another tragedy could occur, and everyone and every thing that's dear to me could be gone in a heartbeat. I have to admit, there are times when I look over my shoulder in the fear that it will happen.

I'm not saying this exactly as it was originally worded, but I'd heard years ago that within every tragedy there is a seed of opportunity. So far I don't know if I've found that seed of opportunity, but I keep looking.

Putting my most painful thoughts and feelings to paper, is probably more difficult than anything I've ever done, and it's not because I'm macho man or the strong silent type. I think it's because writing this has forced me to reach way down into the deepest and most protected feelings that I have, and drag them out for everyone in the world to see. Perhaps it's because it makes me feel naked and vulnerable to the rest of the world and it's the first time I've allowed myself to do that in all these years. But, if another person can realize they are not alone, and they find some solace in these words then maybe it'll help give them the will to survive. Perhaps that is their seed of opportunity.

There are many people who have had greater losses, and faced much more tragedy than I have, and yet every time I write, and re-write, as well as read and re-read this, I'm unable to stop the flow of tears, even though it's been more than thirty years since Jeff died, and thirty five since Mary died.

Although I don't think of Mary and Jeff as often as I used to, when I do, the sense of loss and futility is just as intense as it was the day it happened. Sometimes I think that feeling is even more intense now, because the older I get, the higher value I place on each individual life.

Mary and Jeff's mother, and I were divorced in the late 1960s so I have no way of knowing her feelings. I do know that a father can't carry a baby within his body, which of course means we couldn't begin to know exactly how a mother feels when she loses a child. No matter how hard I would try, I don't think it's possible to truly empathize with her, so I would never diminish a mother's feelings by trying to compare my pain with hers. I don't even know how other fathers feel. I can only try to tell how I feel, and no matter what anyone tells me, I'll always believe that if I had been a better father they would both be alive today.

Time and time again I've wracked my brain, but I still don't understand why I didn't know, and do what it would've taken to prevent their passing. I don't know where I came up short. I only know that I'll *forever* wish I had just one more chance to get it right.

While writing this it reminded me that, when my father died I blamed myself because I felt I wasn't a good enough child, so it doesn't seem to matter whether we are the parent or the child, we blame ourselves for the loss of those closest to us.

After I started writing this, I seemed to get to a point where I couldn't think of how to write it and everything seemed to stall, then one morning some months ago I was listening to NPR on the car radio as a young mother described how her 12 year old son was killed in the park by a driver who had lost control of his vehicle and had run over him. She talked about what a happy child he had been and what a joy he was to her. She also said she couldn't understand why she didn't just die as well, because he had been such a huge part of her life, and she didn't think it was possible to survive that much emotional pain. She, too, felt guilty, because if she hadn't let him go to the park that day, he would still be alive. While listening to her talk I couldn't stop crying, and I realized even after all this time those feelings of tragic loss are always just barely below the surface, waiting to break through at any instant. Plus, I knew then, I had to finish this no matter how difficult it was going to be, because if there are others who share some of my feelings then maybe they'll find some degree of comfort in knowing they aren't alone. If I learn that others share some of my feelings I think it will be of some comfort to me.

Sitting at my laptop writing of this impact on my life I'm struck by an irony. This is the same antique oak table we were sitting around when I learned of Jeff's death. We sat at this table discussing the passing of Mary, my mother, my father-in-law and a few other family members and friends. Paula has two children, and I have four others, so there have also been many hours of **great** pleasure, including an amazing amount of wonderful Thanksgiving, Christmas, and birthday meals spent around this table with our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, not to mention everyday meals and games as well. Consequently, this table has been witness to many life changing events. I just wish I could get this table to talk about all the things it has seen and heard.

Reflecting on this, I've learned that although I'll always feel the loss of Mary and Jeff, and what might have been in their lives; embracing the present and not fearing the future with my remaining family and friends is just as important as not forgetting the tremendous losses in the past. I do know that I don't pass the chance to tell the ones who are important in my life that I love them.

Perhaps being a stronger person for my experiences, and placing a greater value on the times I get to spend with the people I love is my seed of opportunity. I can only hope it is.

I've spent a large portion of my working life in machine shops as a Tool and Die Maker. Consequently, I don't consider myself extraordinary or super human, so I feel if I am able to work my

Our Children Lovingly Remembered

June Birthdays

Child—Parent, Grandparent, Sibling

Antonio McLean - Vera McLean
 Christian Michael Copits - Richard & Beverly Copits
 Karen Kay Paschal - Linda Paschal
 Linda Kimerling - George & Harriet Holbert
 Danny Gene Winchell - Sally Entingh
 Brandon Fox - Theresa Fox
 Brooklyn Renae Pope - Darin Pope
 Jerrid Younker - Susan Cole
 Jerrid Younker - Frank Younker



June Angel-versaries

Child—Parent, Grandparent, Sibling

Andy Glaser - Steve & Cindy Glaser
 Larry Todd Cavanaugh - Linda & Larry Cavanaugh
 Michael David Rhoades - David Rhoades
 Michael Guerra - Terry Guerra
 Nan Marie Hendrix - Jo Hendrix
 Silas Carver - Mary Anne Evans
 Taylor Davis - Barbara Davis
 Susan Eileen Lawrence - Barb Lawrence
 Scott Miller - Marilyn Miller
 Jared Michael Belcher - Kelly Belcher
 Kaitlynn Ariana Yvonne Preston - David & Michelle Preston
 Jessica Back - John & Roberta Back
 Gina Marie Baker - Margery Marshall

BOOK REVIEW by Jackie Glawe (Jordan's mom)

"Gone but Not Lost"

By David W. Wiersbe



We all expect our parents to precede us in death. No one expects to have to make their child's funeral arrangements. And the loss of a child brings with it a special and persistent manifestation of grief that can feel "like a stomachache that never ends."

Each of its brief chapters covers one element of grieving, bringing readers through sorrow and helping them deal with feelings of anger or guilt, as well as the marital strain that may follow the loss of a beloved child.

It has been awhile since I read this book originally after the loss of our daughter, however I had it marked as one that definitely gave me some survival tools for this journey.

This book is available in our TCF Chapter library.



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Making Peace With Grief

I first met the monster called Grief, in 1987: He came to me with the usual dramatics, as my mother's screams echoed through my head over the death of her son.

He ended my life as I once knew it. Grief masked himself in my denial. 'These things don't happen to us. It can't be true. This is just something that needs to be fixed tomorrow. We will be back to being the same:

Grief is sly. He waits silently in the wings of our lives until we are convinced he can never touch us and then Me strikes when we least anticipate him.

Grief overcame me in the upcoming days and my mind defended me against him with its vagueness. Minutes turned into hours and hours into days and days into weeks and they all seemed to run together at times quickly and then agonizingly slowly.

Bits and pieces of lucidness remain with me; those are the times Grief treasures.. The horror of grief is indescribable in words. I was angry and sad and giddy and dazed at the same time that I was emotionless.

Concern overcame those around me, regarding my 'lack of communication'. How could I communicate grief? How could I describe the demon that haunted my dreams, and worse, my reality? What if I talked about him and he gained the upper hand? What if I could no longer control the monster? It was much easier to deny him for the time being - or so I thought.

With a false sense of accomplishment, I believed Grief was under control. After some months (perhaps a year), I coasted thinking Grief was long gone and I could live without him.

Grief, however, is relentless and doesn't stop feeding until he has fully satisfied his appetite for our lives and minds. Panic attacks began eighteen months after Brad died. I began losing weight, then gaining weight, working through the night, then skipping the next week.

I couldn't sleep, then I couldn't sleep for sixteen hours at a time. My heart pounded so powerfully that I thought it would come through my chest. I was convinced there was a physical condition. Something had to make me feel so out of control. It couldn't be the old friend, Grief! I had gotten rid of him a long time ago,

Grief is clever, he convinced me he was gone and then, slyly and quietly, manipulated me right back into his grasp. Like an intruder in the dark night, he softly walked up behind me and grabbed me, once again, with all his might. When I recognized him, he changed.

My panic and depression turned into anger. How clever he is, ever-changing his form and shape so I could never identify or anticipate his attack. I became angry and confrontational with absolutely everyone.

Grief is greedy; he takes no prisoners and wants to affect as many innocent bystanders as he can. Grief owned me for a time. He made me jealous of anyone He hadn't touched. He made decisions for me - the decision to leave a job I loved, the decision to be careless with my safety and the decision to hurt the most important people in my life.

Happily, Grief has an enemy - Time. Time weakens Grief and makes me stronger. Time separates the horrifying episodes associated with Grief and allows me some peace in-between. Time helped me to smile again, and sometimes, even to forget that Grief is patiently waiting for his next attack.

Grief has taught me to be stronger, to understand the importance of loving, to appreciate each day as a gift, to know the true significance of every-day happenings.

Most of all, Grief taught me to remember what we had and what we lost and what we will have again someday. He taught me the importance of sibling love and family unity. He taught me not to take any gift for granted, whether the love of my parents or a kiss from my husband.

Grief is devoted; he refuses to leave me. Today, however, we walk together. We don't fight as we did when we first met, but we treat each other with mutual understanding and respect. I know he's there, and I'm able to recognize him more easily now. I've accepted him as part of my new life and he's loosened his grip and allowed me the upper hand.

Carussa Miller-Avino, Sister of Brad

A Letter to My Brother

Suddenly you're gone. I'm still here. Why? How can this be? Someone tell me the reason, the answer. How can I fill the void, the space once so full of life? What will I do? How will I be strong for others when the sting of pain is so real, so near? Though everyone seems calm, my soul screams at the injustice, the unfairness of losing you. I miss you. I think of you every day and feel you in my heart always. Whatever the reason for your leaving, I know your living had a reason. Despite the brevity of your life, you lived a lifetime's worth. You blessed us with your presence, your specialness. I have only to think of you to feel the joy you've left as a legacy. You shaped the purpose of my life. I can see the world through your eyes.

Robin Holemon
TCF - Tuscaloosa, AL



The Compassionate Friends

Miami County Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

9665 W Covington Gettysburg Rd
Covington OH 45318

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

What is The Compassionate Friends?

The Compassionate Friends is a self-help organization which offers support to families who have experienced the death of a child. Only a person who has experienced the trauma of losing a child can fully understand the pain and suffering involved.

We gather to listen) to share) and to support each other in the resolution of our grief. We need not walk alone, we are The Compassionate Friends.

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

If you are receiving our newsletter for the 1st time, it is because someone told us that you might find it helpful. To find out more about The Compassionate Friends, please call our Chapter Leader, Kim Bundy (937) 573-9877. We cordially invite you to our monthly meetings held on the fourth Thursday of each month. Nothing is ever expected of you. You don't have to speak a single word. Parents who do attend, find comfort, support, friendship and understanding from others who have also lost a child. You do not have to come alone - bring a family member or friend with you.

**You need not
walk alone!**



IF YOU ARE RECEIVING THIS NEWSLETTER, AND WISH TO HAVE YOUR NAME REMOVED FROM OUR MAILING LIST, PLEASE CALL (937) 473-5533 AND LEAVE A MESSAGE.

Thank you.