



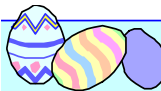
The Compassionate Friends



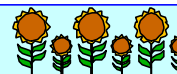
El Paso Chapter



March



April



May



WELCOME TO THE SPRING MEETINGS

Date: Wednesday
March 28, 2007
April 25, 2007
May 30, 2007

Program:

Time: 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Place:

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
1000 Montana Avenue
El Paso, Texas

Board of Directors:

Chairperson: Susan Crews
542-0908

Meeting Facilitators: The Footes

Treasurer: Lou Cain

Newsletter, Website & Mailings:
The Winkelmans

Mark Your Calendar For Future Meetings

June 27: Regular Meeting

July 25: Regular Meeting

Aug 29: Regular Meeting

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS is a self help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents. The purpose of TCF is to aid parents in the positive resolution of the grief experienced upon the death of their child and to foster the physical and emotional health of bereaved parents and surviving children. The El Paso chapter meets in donated church facilities, but no religious creed or affiliation is involved. There are no dues and no one is required to talk at any meeting. Listening is okay! Please join us, together we can make it.



Editor's Notes



We want this newsletter to be *your* newsletter. To do that, we need your help. You are invited – actually, you are strongly encouraged – to contribute to this publication. If you have something to share with other bereaved parents, e-mail it to me so that it can be published in our next newsletter. Please write and share your stories of your child or your sibling. Some of us get to know each other's children through the monthly chapter meetings. But, this newsletter also can be a forum for us to share. Writing is a form of therapy. It will help us get to know each other a little better and it will help us to heal a bit, too. We all have favorite memories that we can share – things that have helped us over the days, months or years. I hope you'll share them with us. It doesn't even have to be a full article. Sometimes, brief paragraphs of memories or thoughts are perfect.

Mail all Entries to: Eric Winkelman
5337 Hunters Glenn
El Paso, TX 79932
or
E-mail me at: ejwinkelsbcglobal.net
Visit our Website at: elpasotcf.org

National Office: TCF National Office
PO Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
(630) 990-0010 or (877) 969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

Healing in Hidden Places: Butterfly Gardens



By Marianne Lohrman

As the days begin to lengthen, promising warmer weather around the bend, I find myself aching for spring's arrival. Each day I look at the calendar, listen to the weather report & wonder when the gray skies of winter will give way to the crisp cerulean of spring.

That's when I realize that it's time for me to take a trip to an indoor butterfly garden or museum. If I think ahead, I remember to wear the bright colors of yellow or red that attract butterflies. After I carefully slip through the double doors and plastic screening of the butterfly house entrance, I am awash in tropical warmth.

I take a quick walk around the entire premises first, quickly panning the tropical plants for the best observation post. After my initial reconnaissance, I select a quiet spot from which to observe and meditate.

Prior to our son Jim's death in 1997, I thought I was grown-up. After his death, I realized that I had matured in a new way. The rosy-colored glasses of innocence that I had worn all my life shattered. My sense that "all is right with the world" vanished. Sunny days hurt my eyes because I couldn't imagine that "happy" light could coexist with mourning. But within a few months I regained a small measure of my previous world view when I inadvertently embarked on a small nature trek. I discovered that nature calmed my angry, hurt inner child. I felt as though a healing rain had washed over my soul.

As a child, I was intrigued by the natural world. When our children Kirsten and Jim were young, I encouraged their love of nature. I have fond memories of the nature walks our family enjoyed throughout the years of their childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. After Jim's death, the outdoors we had explored together provided great solace to my woebegone heart.

At the butterfly pavilion, I sit on a small wrought-iron bench in the shadow of a lush tree and look out toward sun-splattered tropical foliage where butterflies flutter. I am awestruck by the Mardi Gras parade of butterflies. As visitors walk the pathways, butterflies rise and dart. As calm descends again, a male butterfly ventures toward a small puddle in the path. Butterflies sun themselves on rocks like collegiate spring-breakers or gingerly dip from flower to flower sipping nectar.

I drink in smells and sounds that sharpen as my eyes close. I meditate upon the word "joy". Why is it that the sight of a butterfly fills me with heart-expanding joy? Is it the beauty of form? The display of color? The delicacy of movement? Can it be something that approaches the divine? So many famous artists paint angels with expansive bird-like wings. I smile as I imagine teensy angels with butterfly wings. Soft, colorful, silent.

A bereaved mother once told me of a solitary blue butterfly that flew toward her and landed on her open book. She felt certain of a connection between the butterfly and her deceased child. I was more astonished by the fact that she had seen a blue butterfly than by her notion that it was a sign from her child. A few months later, I was hiking through a wooded area in South Carolina when a blue butterfly suddenly

flitted across the path. The swift glimpse of blue reminded me of Jim. Blue-eyed Jim. My friend and I followed the blue butterfly up the trail for about ten minutes before it disappeared into the dense pine shadows. I sighed.

These adventures provide a patch of healing in my life. Some of nature's beauties, like the blue butterfly, are so amazing that a catch comes to my throat and my eyes tear. A sunny rock on a spring day is so inviting that I cannot help smiling as I scramble atop and, observing my momentary domain, exclaim, "I am queen of the universe!"

I laugh as I think of plump Mother Nature roaming the hills and valleys hiding natural treasures, and saying with a wink, "If you look carefully you'll find I have hidden Father's creations just for you."

I wonder what's around the next bend!

Reprinted from *We Need Not Walk Alone*, Spring 2001, magazine of The Compassionate Friends, www.thecompassionatefriends.org

A Solitary Journey By Helen Steiner Rice

Grief is a solitary journey. No one but you knows the gaping hole left in your life when someone you know 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 people have made the same journey. And solace comes from understanding how others have learned to sing again.



Our son, Michael Pattillo, was a child of spring. He was born on May 14, 1973 and died on March 11, 1998. I cannot believe that nine long years have passed since Michael was killed in a car accident. Yes, the years have helped ease the terrible pain of losing him. But Michael is in our minds and thoughts every single day. Many times in the day and night we think of him. Michael left us with many gifts and treasures. I am always finding pictures and writings that he left behind, with his handwritten notes of love for us. And we have come to believe that Michael did not die. He is just away for a little while.

You Did Not Die

You live in the beautiful wind that blows
You live in the sound of birds that crow
You live in the sun that shines so bright
You live in the peaceful dark at night
You live in a star I see in the sky
You live in ocean waves that come in with the tide
You live in the smell of flowers and grass
You live in the seasons that go so fast
You live in my heart that hurts so much
You did not die, we only lost touch.

March's Children Remembered

If your child's name has been left out of this section, or there is missing/incorrect information, please contact me immediately so I can update our data base. Register your child at the El Paso Compassionate Friends website at elpasotcf.org

LIKE LEAVES IN AUTUMN



HERE AND THEN GONE

BUT ALWAYS REMEMBERED

Death Date:	Child's Name:	Age:	Parents:
3/18/93	Robert Todd	23	Son of Mary Lou Cain
3/27/59	Dennis	NB	Son of Carol Winkelman
3/31/95	David Fox	18	Son of Nina Turley

Joe's Easter Basket

As I got out my Easter decorations, it took me back to happier years when my kids were small, and the Easter Bunny was still "real". Joe was the youngest of our four children and when he died, I felt as though it was time to put the Easter baskets away. I asked my other kids if they minded if we skipped the baskets from now on. They agreed, they were too "old" for the Easter Bunny, but it was impossible for me to put away Joe's. When I got his basket out the first year after his death, it still had a few jelly beans, etc. in it and a small surprise for me...

The year before Joe had seen commercials on television for a new spiral handled toothbrush. He bugged the daylights out of me to buy him one. I was very stubborn, telling him they weren't worth the money. I used the excuse that he was a "big kid" and should be using an adult sized toothbrush. The battle went on each time he was with me at the store, or he saw the commercial on television. It was fun to "ruffle" his feathers and heckle him,, he took it so well.

For Easter that year, I bought him a spiral-handled toothbrush. I remember buying it at the store and laughing to myself about how Joe would react when he found this silly toothbrush hidden in his basket. I knew he would say, "I knew I would win." And he did.

My "surprise"...in the bottom of his basket I found the box from that crazy toothbrush. I cried, then I had

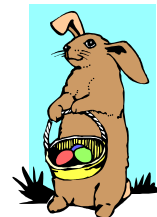
to laugh remembering the fun I had picking on him. I wondered to myself. Why hadn't he thrown the box away? Why was it tucked down under the grass? It was as if he wanted me to find it and to have just one more chuckle over that silly toothbrush!

Yes, his toothbrush is still in the bathroom, as I reminded myself – my other lads have moved out, and yet their toothbrushes remain – so why not Joe's?

Everybody wonders what to do with the Christmas stocking, my dilemma was what to do with the Easter basket? As I looked at the Easter basket, I decided then and there to use it. I now use it to decorate my kitchen table.

I also use it to take snacks along to a gathering. A nice seasonal touch and a small quiet reminder of my wonderful son – Happy Easter Joe!

By Janet Keller from the South Dade, FL TCF Newsletter
~~ in memory of Joe, 6/1/80 – 8/21/94
Lovingly lifted from the TCF Online Sharing



April's Children Remembered

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LIKE LEAVES IN AUTUMN



HERE AND THEN GONE

BUT ALWAYS REMEMBERED

Death Date:	Child:	Age:	Parent:
4/20/97	Richard	30	Son of Mary Windham
4/29/94	Matthew	4	Son of Eric and Patsy Winkelman

April Showers Bring May Flowers



By Stephanie Elson



April is a month known for rain, which is a necessary component to bring out the flowers in May. It is a step that cannot be skipped or done away with. Although at times bleak and dreary, this rainy season is a time of rejuvenation for the ground and prepares the soil to be able to nourish the plant life that will soon come.

The death of a loved one creates a personal “rainy season” that lasts much longer than a single month. The days become figuratively dark and gloomy with menacing clouds hanging overhead. This too is a necessary component for personal healing. So many people I see grow (understandably) tired of their “rainy season”; full of sudden outbursts of tears and thunderous pangs of pain. These emotional storms can not only come quickly, but may linger unmercilessly as well.

In April, with storms coming at the drop of a hat, I know that if I want to manage the amount I get wet, I need to stay prepared. I will keep an umbrella in my office, in the car, at home and with me wherever I go. Likewise those who are weathering “emotional storms” can also prepare themselves. Suggested supplies to keep on hand are many and may vary from person to person. First and foremost, keep tissues on you at all times. Grief is often unexpectedly triggered in the most inconvenient of places. For many, eating is completely thrown off balance. Keep a snack near you as well for times when you suddenly realize you have not eaten all day and feel like you may pass out. Also, it is nice to have something cold to drink to replenish yourself after having a “good” cry. In addition, keep a small notebook and pen handy and write down anything important that you need to remember. People who are grieving are supposed to have no memory when it comes to appointments or grocery lists. These things take a back seat (if that) to mentally reconstructing one’s own life after a death.

As you continue to weather your own storms, remember that the tears you shed are not wasted. They are necessary and healing, preparing you for your coming springtime when the flowers bloom once again.

May's Children Remembered

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LIKE LEAVES IN AUTUMN



HERE AND THEN GONE

BUT ALWAYS REMEMBERED

Death Dates:	Child's Name:	Age:	Parent's Name:
5/11/04	Christopher	19	Son of Colleen Lydon
5/18/04	Aylssa	15 Months	Daughter of Desiree and Hugo Villanueva
5/30/04	Anthony	20	Son of Richard and Sylvia Chacon

Graduation Day

It was Mother's Day weekend, my daughter's birthday and her graduation day. She had completed her college courses within four years, which would have been an accomplishment under normal circumstances. In this case, the last five months of her studies were handicapped by the chemotherapy she had to endure to treat the leukemia. She didn't want it to keep her from her continuing attendance at NC State. She wanted to be treated like a "normal kid" so at first she did not tell her friends. The eventually looked through her belongings and found her medicine.

When it came time to receive her diploma, the advisor mispronounced her name. She picked up her diploma and began to walk away from the podium when suddenly she stopped. She turned around and said, "Natalie! My name is Natalie Sparks!" She then turned around and went back to her seat. It was the proudest of her Mom and Dad's life.

This time of year as her birthday approaches, we think of how she loved her school and her friends. Eight months later as she passed in her hospital bed, I couldn't help but think that "state" never knew that such a gallant, courageous and determined young woman had passed through their doors.

In Memory of our daughter, Natalie, from her loving parents, Terry & Evelyn Sparks, Lawrenceville, GA
Natalie Sparks 5/11/75 - 1/22/98

(Many thanks to Terry, who is a facilitator for TCF Gwinnett)

A Mother's Day Gift to God

Lord today is Mother's Day, but our hearts are split in two
Half is with the child still here,
The other with the child that is there with you.
All the lovely presents are a nice surprise
But the one thing we want most is missing,
And tears fill our eyes.
We know when you sent them Lord,
you didn't promise how long they would stay
All you said was to love them and treasure each and every day.
But Lord it crushed our hearts, when you called for their return
We feel like half a Mom, as we ache weep and yearn.
But Lord tell them we love them just as much as we did before
And could you please make a window,
So they can see through heaven's floor.
Let them see that they are missed
and thought of with each breath
And that a Mother's love begins before life,
And does not end with death.
So on this Mother's Day the greatest gift we give to you
For Lord we know you missed them, and you love them too.
by Sheila Simmons, TCF Atlanta Online
Sending warm embraces and thoughts
to all the Mother's and wishing you a
warm and peace filled day.

A Mother's Hope By Betty Lineberger

When my son died, I hoped it was a mistake. It was not.
I hoped it was a dream. It was not.
Before my son died, I hoped for enough time in that day to clean my house, provide my family with clean laundry, taxi service and healthy meals. I loved dinnertime with my family. After my son died, I did not know what day it was, cleaning our home or doing laundry were things I no longer thought of. I did not cook. I did not shop for food. I did not eat.
I hoped he would come back. He did not.
I hoped I would gain understanding. I did not.
I could not understand how I could wake up on a perfectly normal morning and my son was gone from his room, gone from our home and gone from our lives.
I hoped for acceptance. I found none.
I hoped those around me would understand me. They did not. How could my beautiful, vibrant, healthy son be gone?
I hoped for peace. I had none.
I hoped for sleep. I had none.
I hoped for courage to resume my daily life. My life was out of control. The only thing I was sure of in the early days of my grief was that I knew my life would never be the same again.

I hoped this empty feeling would go away. It did not.
I hoped that some day my family would be normal again. We were not.

I hoped I could stop looking for our son in every young man I saw that was tall, slim and had sandy colored curly hair. I could not.

I hoped I could become the parent to my surviving children that I knew they deserved. I could not.

I knew how much they were hurting but I could not help myself and I could not help my children. My younger son needed my comfort. My daughter, expecting her own child, needed my comfort. I was their mother but there was no comfort in me to give.

I hoped I could be a wife to my husband. I could not.

I never hoped for laughter. How could I laugh when my son was dead? I hoped the feeling that consumed my every waking moment would somehow change so I did not feel as though I could never again be in a public place without crying.

At 6 months after my son died, I hoped for a reprieve. I no longer could stand the pain and I saw my doctor. I knew he must have an answer to my question, "how long will I feel like this?" He did not.

I had begun attending Bereaved Parents meetings and hardly spoke a word at the first meeting. I could not stop talking at the second meeting. I had found the glimmer of hope that I had been searching for. I hoped this all consuming grief would never again happen to my family. But it did! When my daughter-in-law was 6 months pregnant, my son told me their baby had died. How I grieved for my son. I knew what he was feeling. I hoped to be able to help him and his wife. I could not.

I then realized that all of the things I had hoped for had begun to come about but had taken a lot of time. I hoped my son and his wife could hold on long enough for time to help and heal. They have.

When my son died, I never hoped for joy. I could not imagine joy as part of our lives ever again, but there is joy.

When my son was a baby, a toddler, a young child, a teenager and a young man, I watched over him. I thought I would watch over him for my entire life. I was wrong. I hope with all my heart that he is watching over me.

I now have the understanding I hoped for. I have peace. I finally sleep. I find joy every time I see a tall, slim young man with sandy colored curly hair. I do not cry as often.

So there is hope. We all have a future; we have memories. No matter how long our children were part of our lives, we have memories. The first time I realized that joy would one day be part of my life was the day I remembered a trick my son played on his little brother. He gave him a glass of buttermilk instead of regular milk and pretended it was a mistake. We have laughed so many times about this little story. I can still see the twinkle in his eye. I can hear my son and daughter as he made up names for her to tease her. Ho, how he loved to laugh. I remember the look on his face when I discovered the snake he put in my garden terrarium.

I know the joy I feel every time I think of my son, share a memory with someone or look at pictures of him that will never change.

My hope as a Mother is that we all find peace and cherish the joy our children have brought to our lives.

From the Bereaved Parents USA Newsletter,
www.bereavedparentsusa.org

A Mother's Dream

Last Mother's Day I had lunch with my 24 year old son Joseph. Three days later he was gone – a victim of vehicular homicide.

As Mother's Day approaches I have begun to dream:

A ruffled head of hair
Beautiful twinkling brown eyes
An interesting nose that somehow seems to fit
A large engaging smile and a highly intelligent mind

An intense love of music and an ability to dance like you don't care whose watching
Flannel shirt, green army jacket, clunky boots, reds and Jack.

A gentle touch – a fierce hug – a special smell

They're all there
They're all so real
They're all still here
In a mama's dream.

Joe Joe mama loves you.

Written by Nancy Long, May 2006
in memory of her son Joe, 6/25/80 – 5/11/05

*The children
Who were with us
In the rush of life,
Let them now be with us
In the peace of spirit.*

*By Sascha Wagner
From her book "Wintersun"*

Love Gifts

A LOVE GIFT is a gift of money or service to The Compassionate Friends. It is usually in honor of a child who has died but it can also be a gift to help in the work of the El Paso Chapter of TCF. Your gifts are tax deductible and are our Chapter's only monetary support. Your donation will help us pay for postage and labels for sending our newsletter each month.

LOVE GIFT

Name of Person to be Remembered _____

Special Occasion of Person _____

Given By _____

Send To: Mary Lou Cain
5664 Beth View
El Paso, TX 79932

Love Gifts For Spring

Carol Winkelman, In memory of her son Dennis 3/27/59, and her grandson Matthew's Birthday, February 15

I AM YOUR SISTER AND ALWAYS WILL BE

"I am your sister and always will be." That's how Susie signed her cards to me. After a while, she shortened it to, "I" am..." And of course I knew the rest of it. Susie was two and one-half years younger than I. She was alive one evening talking on the phone to Mom about the Oscars and to Dad about moving. The next day she was found. Whatever it was —it ended her life and changed mine forever. There was a wonderful side of my sister that I didn't pay enough attention to. She was a kind and loving person, always ready to shelter lost animals and lost souls. When she was in a good mood, her smile warmed my heart. Yet I spent most of my life wishing that things were different: wishing that she thought more of herself; wishing that she would take my advice, wishing that she was happier; wishing that we could accept each other. Now, for two years, I've done nothing but wish she was here so we could have another chance to work at our relationship. Now, I wish that I had been able to give her my unconditional love and support. (She needed it and deserved it.) Now, I wish that I could have been with her that night so she would not have been so alone. Now, I wish that I would have held her in my arms and told her how very much I loved her. Because, Susie, I am your sister and always will be.

By Michele Walters, TCF Baltimore, Maryland

TO MY BROTHERS

Have you ever lost two brothers?
To an auto accident?
It can really make you crazy
Wondering why and where they went!

They had smiles bright as sunshine,
Hugs as warm as summer rain.
And they loved until their hearts would burst
And then they'd love again.

In the sunrise every morning
I am sure that I do see
My warm and loving brothers
Reaching out and touching me.

With each gentle breeze of Springtime
Comes a message from above
They were here and gave me laughter
And filled my heart with love.

If I could have but one wish
The secret wish would be
That everyone could know the love
My brothers gave to me!

By Kathy Gunthrie, TCF Cape May, New Jersey

The Silent Accident

By Sue Holtkamp

It was terribly cold, even for a January morning in northern New Jersey. Two feet of snow had fallen during the night, leaving the little hamlet where the child and her family lived isolated from the rest of the world.

Area schools were closed. Workers were requested to remain at home unless their jobs were essential to public welfare. Everywhere families were stranded. Since they had just moved into their new home, the child's family was totally unprepared. With practically no food in the house, the decision was made for the child's father and two older sisters to follow the snowplow to the nearest grocery. The child, only five years old, would stay with her mother. She was usually obedient and no one expected her to disobey. But she did.

Slipping on her boots, without bothering with socks, and her coat, the child sneaked out to where her family had parked waiting for the snowplow to complete its task on the next road.

Seeing the child as she crossed the street, the family rolled down the windows and shouted, "Go back, go back!" Only after their screams to go back, only when the child obediently turned to cross the street, only then, when it was too late did they notice another car gliding past them.

Her curly blond hair without a cap, her unbuttoned jacket clasped around her small body, her bare, cold feet covered only by rubber boots, all disappeared from view as the big car pressed forward past the now hushed family car. Twenty feet later the car slid to a halt. The child was gone. Not a sound could be heard.

It was terribly cold and now terribly quiet. The stillness of the moment was broken only by the echoing screams of the child's family. Then quietly, each filled with his own dread, the father, the sisters and the driver left their cars, moving cautiously over the slippery ice to the front of the offending car. Stiffly they inched their way forward, experiencing such fear that no one could speak. Only one thought was in their minds. "What would they find?"

Tiny red rubber boots lay scattered in opposite directions on the frozen earth; small hands clutched the bumper; large blue eyes were open wide with fright—still no one spoke. After a long moment the tiny child's voice broke the chilling silence with words of wisdom born of five years experience. "I think I did something wrong."

This declaration was followed by muffled cries and tears wiped on cold jacket sleeves, solemn promises made in the hearts of two older sisters, relief that defies description for both the father and the driver.

The child was checked for injuries and then checked again. She was bundled into fresh warm clothes and cuddled in front of the fireplace in her cozy home. Loved more that day than in the weeks before. She had sustained no bruises, no scratches, no breaks. The family and the driver would never forget that terrifying, silent accident. The child would never remember.

There came a time when she would die, this precious child of mine . . . twelve years later, with her father in a small plane crash. I don't know why they died so young and so healthy, anymore than I know why she was spared so many years before.

But I do know that I would endure all the pain again just to have her grace my life. Even now memories of this wondrous child make my heart sing.

Sue Holtkamp was a keynote speaker at the opening of the Nashville TCF National Conference in 1998. She is an author, having written several books including "Grieving with Hope" and "Catherine: in search of something more." She earned her Ph.D. in 1991 with a focus on traumatic loss and recovery. Founder and director of Something More Bereavement Programs, Sue has served as a consultant to organ and tissue procurement organizations, hospices, funeral homes, and other organizations.

We Need Not Walk Alone, the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends. Copyright 1998

You Did Not Die

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You live in my heart that hurts so much
You did not die, we only lost touch.

Death of the Physical Body into energy The butterfly transformation; Believing is seeing!

By Natalie Smith-Blakeslee

Oct. 2006

When we, as a family knew there was nothing more we could do for our daughter Carrie, we made her as comfortable as possible. I talked with her about life after death. And heaven. She asked me some pretty interesting but yet difficult questions:

Mom she said : Do you really believe there is a heaven?

And How long does it take to die?

Can I really watch out after everyone here?

As you can see they were some hard and difficult questions to answer from your own dying child. Carrie was 27 years old when we lost her. If there was anytime ever in my life that I questioned by faith, and my knowledge in the after life it was then.

I spoke slowly and said "Carrie, Yes I do believe that there is life after death." I did see the other side and told her what heaven was like. I told her that when she got to the other side she could communicate through dreams with her father and she could disconnect me when I was talking on the phone. That we would know that this was her doing this. I explained that she could look out after Morgen and that she could help Morgen with her progress in school much like she did when she was here.

When she asked me how long it took to die, what was an even harder question to answer. One that I could give no real answer to except "Hon I am not really sure, that is up to you and God." That question hit me like a ton of bricks as I didn't expect her to ask that one. I did assure her that she would feel no pain and that she would have a grand family reunion with people she hadn't seen in a very long time. She smiled, I think she had already started to see them at that point.

I know now that Carrie and all the loved ones we have lost are not lost. They are different and have shed the shell they occupied when they were here. They are now energy. The ways of communication I spoke with my own daughter about is the same ways she first started to communicate with her Father, John and I. Within four days after her passing John and I both had dreams. After 12 hours of her passing during a three hour conversation between my sister and I. I was disconnected 18 times.

It was then and now with all of the other communication that we have had since that strengthens my knowledge and belief of life after death. That our loved ones do live on.

There are so many ways our children and loved ones can communicate. We need to know what to look for. If we don't know what to look for how can we be sure we aren't getting signs.

Common signs :

Dreams of your child or loved ones passed.

Pennies and coins I call them pennies from heaven.

Butterflies, they are the symbol of transition.

Smelling a fragrance that reminds you of your child or loved one.

A phrase you hear on TV or that someone just says, you loved one said the same phrase?

Electrical items not working properly, TV changing stations on times on clocks wrong.

Disconnecting phone calls.

These are just some of the ways your loved ones can and do communicate. Now after reviewing them has your child let you know their ok on the other side, or your other loved ones that you have lost?

Watch for signs. Seeing is believing. Believing is seeing!

Love and Light

Natalie Smith-Blakeslee

Susan, Clint's Mom

Clinton Terry Milam

04/07/93-08/05/03

Butterfly

A butterfly lights upon a flower,
Sprinkled with dew,
Then it gently flies off, in search of something new.
Little butterfly, so fragile and pastel,
Won't you stay and visit with me for awhile?
Lovely little butterfly,
With a smile upon my face,
I watch in awe your delicacy,
Given by God's grace, wings soft as silk,
You glide away,
As longingly I watch in sadness,
I want you so to stay.

By Lynn McCurdy

*In Memory of my beloved son, Ken
March 23, 1965 – March 25, 1990*

Side by Side

At the time of Aaron's death, Paul and I had been married 16 years. In that time we had the usual reconcilable differences, as well as an allotted portion of hardships, which we had faced and endured together. Until our son's death ripped us asunder, there had been no blow that we, as a couple, could not withstand. It was in the very early days of our sorrow that Paul and I first became aware that this journey would be made, in many ways, separated. What we did not know was that we, who had been blessed in union, would grow as a couple as we each grew in respect for the individual strengths of the other.

In order for Paul to make it through those first horrible months, it was necessary that he sift through the facts of Aaron's death. Trying to make sense of a senseless tragedy, he attempted to fit all the pieces together as if solving a puzzle. Toward this end, he acquired and studied the reports done by both the police and Medical Examiner, attempting to share this information with me. I was horrified. I did not want to know how far my son's body was thrown, nor did I care that one shoe was found 75 feet from the other. Paul was struggling then with what tortured me two years later: Aaron, running for his life, arms pumping in the swiftly brightening glare of approaching headlights.

What we have learned to do is to allow one another time and space to grieve. While this statement does not possess a profound ring, I believe it to be the single most important decision we have ever made as a couple. We, who had shared Aaron's birth and all his life, found his death, a shared burden, something we have each had to bear alone. When, nearing two years beyond his death, my mind became a theater from hell in which scenes of Aaron's death continually played, I reached out to my partner for help. And my partner, struggling to stay afloat, said to me, "I don't want to hear that, Frankie. It's what I saw every time I closed my eyes for SIX months after Aaron died." Immediately, I had recall of his contest with those vivid pictures, and I understood his statement of self-preservation was not an act of rejection. I found others who could bear to hear the terrible things I had to say. I endured.

Recently, Paul and I had occasion to lie out on the pier at the lake in which we spread the ashes of our son. Side by side we were, heads touching, but bodies aimed in opposite directions. We really didn't have much to say. It was enough that we had reached this place together.

During these past three years, each of us has sat in the darkness alone, while the other, trusted companion and intimate friend, slept on unaware. I have read that we are to bear one another's burdens, and to comfort with the comfort which we have been given. I understand now that these words were written for those who have suffered and survived. We cannot give away what we have not acquired for ourselves.

Though we have not been given the luxury of growing complacent in our marriage, this experience has resulted in the gift of a deeper intimacy. I have acquired a greater awareness and appreciation for the love and support Paul offers me, as well as that which only I can give myself. In choosing to respect our difference, we have embraced strengths we had not even known existed. Standing apart, we found that we could move forward together, alone. Alone, together.

By Frankie Wilford

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