



The Compassionate Friends



El Paso Chapter



June



July



August



WELCOME TO THE SUMMER MEETINGS

Date: Wednesday
June 25, 2007
July 30, 2007
August 27, 2007

Program:

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

Place:

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

Board of Directors:

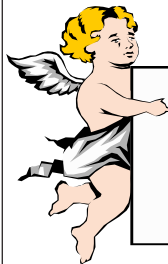
Chairperson: Susan Crews
542-0908

Sec/Treasurer: Lou Cain
Newsletter, Copies & Mailing:
The Winkelmans

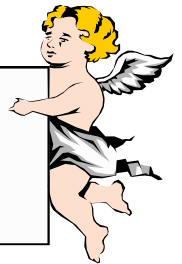
Mark Your Calendar For Future Meetings

Sept 24: Regular Meeting
Oct 5?: Annual Balloon Picnic
Oct 29: Regular Meeting
Nov 26: 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.

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PO Box 3696
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www.compassionatefriends.org

Father's Day 2008

Father's Day is special to all father's hearts as Mother's Day is to mothers. It is a day our children and grandchildren honor us as the "important male figure" in their lives. As Father's Day approaches, those of us that have lost children ache that our child or grandchild is no longer here on earth to honor us on that special Sunday in June. Those of us that have living children and grandchildren must muster up to be honored by them. And all the joy and love they bring into our lives.

I lost my oldest son, Michael Pattillo, on March 11, 1998 in a traffic wreck at the age of twenty-four years old. This will be my eleventh Father's Day without Michael. And the pain of his physical presences is still very much with me. Michael put much thought into his gifts that he gave the ones he loved. Michael always made a special shopping trip to his favorite department store and selected a special gift. But the most special gift he left me was his love. And, the gift of me being his father for almost twenty-five years.

Below is a special poem I would like to dedicate to my son, Michael Pattillo, and to all sons gone before their time.

Fathers in Grief, a Paradox for Today's Male

The loss of your child can be crippling and leaves deep scars, it changes who we are and how we look at life and how we relate with the world. Five or six years out is still early in the spectrum of child loss but close to the point where positive rebuilding can begin. One thing that I have discovered that helps pull you out of the canyon of despair is compassion for others, it is giving that we receive and in healing that we are healed.

In the first few years it is hard to even help yourself much less others and we mechanically maintain, weep a lot and lick our wounds while clinging desperately to everything of our child and in secret wish to join them. We rejoin the real world at our own time and it happens when it right for us. Every ones journey is different, but what remains the same is the huge void that is left in our lives. How we fill it is up to us. I believe we need to fill it with something positive for others that creates a legacy of good in our child's name. We now become their legacy and we substantiate our child's life by the way we live ours.

In our "modern day" society it is especially difficult for fathers to grieve openly, caught in a catch 22 of how to express the deep pain we our experiencing. Men don't cry,

men do not emote, men do not hug (maybe at the funeral) men don't go to support groups, men don't call in sick because they are screaming inside, we are the man of the family. Fathers are the fix it guys, the protector, the strength and the rock the family needs for support. More times than not people will ask a father "how is your wife doing? This must be hard extremely for her".

The modern male is now given (by women and therapists) license to show emotions, to cry, scream, hug and express their deepest emotions and fears, to let it out. The Irony of this is if he does emote and the family has never seen this behavior, it is taken as a sign of weakness and the spouse and other family members feel they have lost their safety net, their rock of support, and feel even more helpless and rudderless on this journey of pain. If this happens he may again 'clam up' to help with his family and deal with his own pain later. He finds that 'letting it out' is an axiom of sophistry and in doing so he feels he is letting his family down. Indeed a paradox for the wanna-be sensitive Dad. Most men cry alone in their cars on the way to work and they explain that the red eyes are due to allergies, or a late night. When my father died when I was age 14, my Mom told me I was the man of the family now, I did not cry, I did not grieve. It was not until years later and my losses became overwhelming did I finally let it out and express my emotions for the loss of my father. It has been 16 years now since Kelly died and I still cry with my wife when we feel our loss together or even when I hear a special song like 'Wind beneath my Wings' and I do not care who is present, you love hard you grieve hard and it is supposed to hurt. When you recognize your own pain and express it, you automatically become more empathetic to others in similar pain and can help relieve theirs. Hell, now I cry at Hallmark Card commercials, I can't help it.

When people tell us to find closure, or move on and don't dwell on it. We can, but not how they think we should. We find closure in what will never be, let go of the what ifs, the shoulda -woulda -couldas and move on with the knowledge that our children are forever by our side, only in a new relationship. We live in one sphere of existence, our loved one who has died in another, but with faith, undying love and the desire we can connect at the seam where our two worlds meet. Love never dies.

In America we are allowed a few weeks to "get over it" and get back on track. The dead are wrapped up neatly so to speak and put away and their names unspoken. I find this totally unacceptable, it has been almost 16 years and I still talk about Kelly everyday and always will. We will always be bereaved parents but we will not always be experiencing the pangs of grief. Like arthritis we learn to live with it the rest of our lives, and also realize we shall still have flare ups of pain and discomfort as we move on through the years

June, July and August 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.

LIKE LEAVES IN AUTUMN



HERE AND THEN GONE

BUT ALWAYS REMEMBERED

Death Date:	Age:	Child's Name:	Parents:
6/1/1993	NB	Daniel	Son of Charla McDaniel
6/4/2001	24	Ernesto Torres	Son of Connie Arce
6/17/1991	23	David	Son of Karen Valentino
6/19/1995	35	Mark	Son of Estella Townsend
6/26/1988	17	Peter	Son of Bonnie Winkelman
7/13/1996	9	Thomas	Son of Ann Sparkes
7/14/2007	31	Lawrence	Son of Elsie and Edward Margerum
7/29/2000	15	Sherrie	Daughter of Norma and Tim Foote
8/7/1993	19	R. J.	Son of Mr. & Mrs. Joe Halow
8/26/1996	28	Philip	Son of Mr. & Mrs. Herb Winograd

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.

Father's Day

Father's Day-a day of thanks
 From caring children.
 Children who weren't perfect
 Just as Dad wasn't perfect
 But who appreciated Dad
 As they got older.

But now one is gone
 And, that one
 I'd like to think
 Appreciated Dad too.
 Written by David Haddock, Clinton, Mississippi
 In memory of Bonnie Catherine Haddock (2/06/1985-08/13/2002)

Vacations

Whether you are newly bereaved or you have been on this journey a long time, the change of seasons and the thoughts of coming "events" are hard but it is how you approach them that matters the most.

How will we handle vacation this year? How can we go on vacation without our child? How can I possibly have a good vacation without my child? Why would I want to go on vacation without my child? These are some of the questions we ask ourselves either knowingly or unconsciously and the answers are as vast as the way we grieve.

For my family it was not a question of whether or not to go on vacation the following summer (we lost our son in December 2001) but it became a question of why shouldn't we go? We had vacationed at the same place in the summer for 18 years and we started thinking about all the good time we had at the "pond" all those years -all the friends we had made, the friends our children had made, but most of all the memories we had made within our own family.

For us it became a desire to "go back" and visit the place where our son had been happy and felt safe and secure - a place where we could just go and "let go". For both my husband and I and now our daughter and her family, the "pond" continues to be a place where we can go and feel close to our son because we know how much he loved it there.

It was hard that first year, and even the next, as we looked for him everywhere. We chose to have a different campsite than we normally used that first year, but the next we moved back to our favorite campsite - it just felt right. As hard as it was to return to the pond there was and is a peaceful feeling that comes to us there as we allow all of the good memories to invade our waking moments and we open our hearts and heads to those memories, knowing that our son had been there and it was one of his favorite places to be. And perhaps the best part was that we gave our family and our friends an opportunity to talk with us about Joey - delivering some "Joey Stories" that we had never heard before and cherishing the fact that all these people wanted to share their memories and continue to do so 5 years later.

As you make plans for this summer, whatever they are, know that you have to do what feels right to you - there is no right or wrong. If you can, open your heart and follow it and let those stored memories carry you through.

Cindi Bolivar

from the TCF July 2007 Northshore/Boston Newsletter

Summer Thoughts

Summer is a time when things naturally slow down, when many are waiting for the orderly routine of their lives to begin again. For those of us in grief whose lives are already in limbo, it can seem endless if we let it. Seeing babies, children, and teenagers is not easy for us, and we see them everywhere, from shopping centers to beaches. Everyone is out living, loving, enjoying carefree activities with their children and we want to scream "it's not fair!" I was sitting on my patio one evening at dusk listening to the shouts of children playing and I was crying as I remembered the sounds my child used to make. I became very depressed as I thought of what a very long summer this would be.

In my reverie, I was reminded of a recent comment I'd heard at a TCF meeting "My child was such a loving, giving person. He would not want me to waste my life being bitter." I also remembered a good friend telling me to "count my blessings" and naming all the things I had to be grateful for. I was furious at the time. Nothing that I had to be grateful for could compensate for the fact that my child was dead.

Now, sitting in the twilight of this early summer evening, I began to see things differently. I determined that this summer would not be an eternity; I would not let it be. I decided first of all to stay busy. I know I can find plenty to do if I only take the time to look. I am also going to try to enjoy the simple things that used to give me so much pleasure, like working in my garden and flowers. I then decided to try to be truly grateful for the blessings that I have, like my husband, my surviving children, my job, friends, etc.

It has been almost five years for me and I know that last year this would not have worked. Of course, I still have times of sadness. I know I always will but I have decided that in the process of grieving we close so many doors that the only way to recovery is to reopen them gradually at our own pace.

I know I will never be the same person I was before the death of my child, but I hope eventually in some ways I will be a better person because suffering can be beneficial if we learn and grow through it. A year ago I didn't feel this way, and I know I still have a long way to go, but in the meantime I know the greatest tribute to my child will be to enjoy this summer, as he would have done.

By Libby Gonzalez
TCF Huntsville, Alabama

A Father Writes

It was 3 am . I found myself sitting in the garage in the low-to-the-ground seat of my David's go-cart, sobbing from depths of my being I never knew existed. Yesterday was the funeral- four days ago we discovered his beautiful body in the bottom of the pool on a church retreat. Why?

I, who was a proclaimer of truth (Methodist minister) and a bearer of light, had suddenly discovered my own light extinguished. Hundreds of times I had stood behind the casket dispensing words of hope and comfort to the "survivors." Yesterday, for the that time, my beautiful wife, my two living sons and ourselves seated in front of the casket of our oldest son David. We were now to be known as the 'survivors." Believe me, the view is quite different from the front! Now, all the proclaiming I had spent a lifetime in doing must stand the test of my own tragedy. Could it stand such a devastating test?

I didn't spend much time questioning, 'Why me, Lord?' I've known for many years that it "rains on the just and the unjust." Why me? Why not! After all, I am a member of the human race with no special privileges because of my Christian lifestyle. I must be honest and tell you, however, that this concept didn't just tumble neatly into place in dealing with the death of my son. But I really have accepted the loss.

My greater struggle was not in why the loss, but where is the gain in the loss? The most atrocious and destructive type of suffering is pain without purpose, misery without meaning. Weeks turned into months. I wandered in a fog. Oh, I wore my "happy face," but how I agonized in trying to find sense in the senseless. God, I missed my boy so terribly! I was at a fork in the road. Out of my loss I would become either a bitter person or a better person. The choice was mine. But I wasn't ready to make that decision—I missed my David so much. I had to have time to grieve.

Would my turning point ever come? Could I ever find purpose and meaning in my loss? Oh, how I missed him. Then, the turning point came. I believe there is a turning point for every bereaved parent—if you desire a turning point. It comes in different ways for each of us if we are to be me "survivors" in the fullest sense of the word. It may come in a sunrise; it may come through another child who needs you; it may come at an altar of prayer. Thousands of ways it may come - BUT IT MUST COME! Mine came in a dream.

There he was! Walking toward me as if coming out of a mist. There he was - that lanky 17-year-old whose life I loved better than my own. He looked deeply into my eyes with a grin on his face - the way he used to do when he was "buttering me up." Not a word was spoken by either of us. All of the sudden, he threw his arms about me and gave me one of those bear hugs he was good at doing. He let go, smiled again and walked away. Though not a word was spoken, everything was said that needed to be said for my turning point to come.

It was time to resume life. I would not be bitter, but in his loving memory, I would be better. I would live again, because I knew that my boy lived again, because I knew that my boy lived

again. My own Christian faith was to be retrofitted. It offered meaning and purpose within the shadow of my loss. It asserted that though God does not intend my sufferings, He involves Himself in them. My pain and loss was not to be the end of life. Rather, it was to be a beginning - a beginning to a more compassionate life of quality and caring.

His bear hug told me, "It's okay. Go ahead and live life in its fullness as a tribute to me." Thank you, David; that's the greatest gift a son could ever give to his dad.

Rev. Ken Kulp, Atlanta, GA
~reprinted from Bereaved Parents Central Savannah River Area Newsletter

Fathers Do Hurt

Gerry Hunt, TCF, White River Junction, VT

Every father believes in his role as protector of his family. He has been assigned the job of fixer and problem solver. He has been told, since his youngest days, that he must be strong — must not cry.

But each father among us has had to face that point where no amount of fixing, problem solving, and protecting has been able to stop our child's death. And inside we must ask ourselves about our failure, and we must face our lack of omnipotence.

Father's Day is often a forgotten holiday, overshadowed by the longer standing tribute to mothers. But for the bereaved father it is a poignant reminder of bitter sweetness. Sweet in the memory of a loved, now lost, child; bitter for the death and pain and recognition of the inability to stop what happened. Fathers do not often have a chance to share their hurts and concerns. Often times they are unable to do so, a remnant of childhood learnings about the strength and stoicism of "big boys." A father may even be uncomfortable opening up to his wife, and the wife who pushes him to talk may be pushing too hard.

Father's Day does not have to be a time when everyone pours out of the woodwork to say, "I'm sorry we haven't talked. Let's do it now." But it can be a time when the family gives Dad a hug, does something special, helps with the chores, and mostly, lets him know how important and needed and loved he is. It is some of these things that he has lost with the death of a child.

And like Mother's Day, the day set aside for fathers does not have to be limited to a Sunday in June. It can be any day and every day.

Fathers often show their hurts differently, often internally. BUT THEY DO HURT.

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 Loving Memory of Her Grandson Matthew Winkelman 4/29/94, and Her Son Dennis, 3/27/59

Beloved Brother - Losing You is Losing Me

Dearest Justin:

To lose a sibling is to lose oneself,
For a part of me is gone...
And now I'm left to reminisce
As now I try to carry on.

The thought of you not being here
Has torn my world apart...
Yet every day I feel you near;
Is a blessing to my heart.

Your memory comforts me today
In ways I wish you knew...
But tears are falling from the pain
That comes from losing you.

I see your face in the morning sun
And in the moon at night...
I wonder how you're feeling now...
I pray that you're alright.

And one day when my time has come
To soar with eagles' wings...
We will be joined forevermore.

I love you forever and always.
By Charlie Clakley, TCF Tyler, Texas
In memory of his brother Justin Clakley

I'll Always Be Your Dad

By Alan Pedersen

Years have come and gone and time has surely drifted by
I've searched for any answer yet I'm left to wonder why
The only thing I know for sure through the happy and the sad
No matter what the circumstance I will always be your dad
Not a day goes by that I don't hold you in my heart
My love reaches far beyond this space we are apart
These empty arms remember all the good times that we had
I may be standing here alone but I will always be your dad
Some won't understand so I don't bother to explain
They look into my eyes but they can only see the pain
Afraid to look too deep as they are blinded by the fear
If only they could know a father's love won't disappear
So when this road gets lonely and the journey seems too hard
And I get to feeling sorry that I didn't get a card
If I close my eyes I can almost hear you say
I love you and I miss you daddy....Happy Fathers Day
Blessings,
Alan Pedersen

songwrtr@comcast.net

Embracing The Invisible Kinship of Compassionate Friends

Every morning following the death of my son I awoke and thought, “my child is dead.” The enormity of that realization each morning was crushing, the momentary shock was like a knife in my heart. I would drag myself out of bed and shed silent tears. My life was forever changed: my only child’s life had ended. The unfairness would rock me into hyper-consciousness as I began my day. Living was a major effort.

Initially I could only cling to my sanity. After the shock passed, the depression and anger had me in a vise grip. My moods would swing every morning, afternoon and night. I would retreat into myself, irrationally lash out at others and then retreat back into myself. My mind would wander, I made silly mistakes in my work, I couldn’t recall names of people who had been in my life for years and my word retrieval was at the bottom.

After two and half months of this grim routine, I attended my first Compassionate Friends meeting. A friend drove me and guided me along into the meeting. I was in a haze. The only contribution I could make was to tearfully say my son’s name. But I continued to attend. As the newly bereaved, I was given the gift of wisdom from those who had been on this journey much longer than I had been. After several meetings I began contributing little bits. I still wept each time I talked, but I was talking. This was a major breakthrough for me.

Despite the negativity that enveloped me as I let go of my life before the death of my son, I continued to attend Compassionate Friends meetings. I missed my son’s ability to soften the vitriolic attitude of others who were in his life. Now I was on the firing line. I began sharing my experiences, the horrors of being sued for the wrongful death of my own child and the ache I felt for a once normal relationship with my son’s children. Life was forever altered.....for my grandchildren and for me.

The “wise ones” guided me along this path of grief. I learned to live in the moment. I learned to place no expectations on others. I learned that once burned is twice warned in human relationships. I learned that I could survive if I chose to do so. I also learned that to extend my compassion to others was to participate in my healing.

Eventually I wrote an article for our Compassionate Friends newsletter and gave it to the editor. Then I wrote another, and another, and another. Then I began printing the newsletter. Each step, each little contribution brought me closer to sanity. I was participating in the effort to help others in their journey of grief, and in doing this I was helping myself on the journey. I was working with those who had made this journey and survived. Perhaps I, too, would survive. Then I was asked to be the editor of the newsletter. At first I was fearful of this responsibility, but then I realized that I could, in some small way, help others whose children had died. And in offering that help, I could further my personal healing.

It’s been 2 years, 8 months and 10 days since my son, Todd, was killed in a car accident. My husband, who was driving, has worked very hard to retain his sanity. I have learned to help him in that struggle. I have learned to accept that my relationship with my granddaughters was forever relegated to pure insignificance after my son died. I have learned

that money is the alpha and the omega for some people and the pain they inflict to get money is justified in their minds. I have learned to accept life as it comes. I am the director of my life and no others.

How am I traversing that road from pure shock to accepting new normalcy? How do I keep my child with me and let go of the horrifying, life altering changes associated with his death? How do I deal with the stupefying actions of others that followed my son’s death? The answer is as simple and as complex as the grief and compassion that lives within each parent whose child has died.

Through the efforts of the “wise ones”, I found comfort and hope. The comfort offered by those who have lost a child is unlike any other we will experience. Their loss is the same as ours: the unspeakable, the worst nightmare, the darkest fear of every parent has now transformed into their reality. Their compassion is real. Their suggestions are gentle. Their wisdom comes over time and is the culmination of experiences which bring the realization that each of us progresses at a different rate, grieves in a different way and deals with life from a different perspective.

Those who have been here and choose to return, to relive the pain of their child’s death in order to help others are the nucleus of our organization. And so, as each day goes by, I learn from others that I must learn for myself. My truth is unique. Each truth is unique. Each parent is unique. Each child is uniquely remembered by bereaved parents and every member of our Compassionate Friends group.

I realized this week that my first thought of the day doesn’t overwhelm me like it once did. My child lives in my heart. I have learned to live that reality. It is my hope to help other parents find this tiny vestige of peace.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
TCF, Katy, TX
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

August

The 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 hope and wealth from love remembered.

By Sascha Wagner from her book
“The Sorrow and the Light”

DEAREST SON

It's a boy they said as I heard you cry
And cradled you in my arms
Gazing upon your tiny face
I was awestruck by your tiny charms
Diapers, tears and laughter
Schoolwork, fun and flu
Soccer games to teenage days
Lovely scenes of you. Lost in love and hassle
The years go rush by
I woke up one morning
And heard you say "goodbye"
Your childhood's a special memory
But I thank God above
For the man and friend
Born from that child
You'll always have
My love.

Wayne Pattillo
Lawrenceville GA
Gwinnett Chapter of TCF

Pennies From Heaven

I found a penny today
Just laying on the ground,
But it's not just a penny
This little coin that I found

Found pennies come from heaven
That's what my grampa told me,
He said angels throw them down
Oh, how I loved that story.

He said when an Angel misses you
They toss a penny down
Sometimes just to cheer you up
To make a smile out of your frown.

So don't pass by that penny
When you're feeling sad or blue
It may be a penny from Heaven
That an angel tossed to you.

In Loving Memory of Matthew Hinson
4/24/90 - 6/16/05

Self Help Organization Offering Friendship and Understanding to Bereaved Parent

Address Correction Requested



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
1000 MONTANA
EL PASO, TX 79902