

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

A self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved families

November 2009

Inside Valley Forge

Meetings are on the first Thursday of every month at 7:45PM (ending at 9:30PM). We meet at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall at Valley Forge and Henderson RDs, King of Prussia, PA. Phone on meeting evenings only is 610-265-0733. All other times please call Ann or Rhonda at 484-919-0820.

Meeting Schedule

Please Mark Your Calendar

- Nov 5** General Sharing & Death by Suicide
Collection of gifts for First Step (see page 8)
- Dec 3** General Sharing
Collection of gifts for First Step
(see page 8)
- Dec 13** World Wide Candle Lighting
(see page 3)

PLEASE NOTE: ALL CONTRIBUTIONS SHOULD BE SENT TO DIANA CLARK (see page 4)

THE DECEMBER & JANUARY NEWSLETTER WILL BE A COMBINED PUBLICATION. ALL ARTICLES & LOVE GIFTS SHOULD BE SENT TO THE NEWSLETTER EDITORS BY NOV 15TH.

We encourage newsletter writings from our members. You may also submit articles written by others, please include the author of all articles submitted.

There are no dues or fees to belong to The Compassionate Friends, or to receive our newsletter. Your tax deductible donations given in memory of your loved one enables us to defray the cost of chapter expenses, particularly the newsletter, meetings, and our outreach to the newly bereaved. **Please include any special tribute you wish printed in the newsletter along with your gift.**

**PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
TCF VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER
SEND TO: RECORD KEEPER, DIANA CLARK
PLEASE SEND ALL OTHER CHAPTER MAIL
TO CHAPTER CO-LEADERS
ANN MURRAY or RHONDA GOMEZ**



Valley Forge Chapter

Chapter Co-Leader

Ann Murray
email: ann@tcfvalleyforge.org
(484) 919-0820 Chapter cell phone

Chapter Co-Leader

Rhonda Gomez
12 Brook Circle
Glenmoore, PA 19343
(484) 919-0820 Chapter cell phone
email: sugar@tcfvalleyforge.org

Database Record Keeper

Diana Clark
742 Berwyn Avenue
Berwyn, PA 19312
(610) 656-2437
diana.clark707@gmail.com

Webmaster

Frank Gomez
www.tcfvalleyforge.org

Newsletter Editors

Marie & Ken Hofmockel
340 Allendale Road
King of Prussia, PA 19406
(610)337-1907
email: kenhofmockel@comcast.net

E.PA Regional Coordinators

Janet & Dave Keller
(747) 292-6046
email: jd292comcast.net

National Headquarters

P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
Toll Free: (877)969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org
email: national.office@compassionatefriends.org

We extend our love and get well wished to **Sharon Ott**, who is recovering well at home from heart bypass surgery. Sharon has been very faithful attending meetings since she joined our chapter shortly after her daughter, Amber, died in 1997.

Due to personal conflicts, the December & January issue of the Valley Forge newsletter will be a combined publication.

The cut off date for receiving articles and love gifts will be Nov. 15th

NEW FRIENDS

Ron & Sue Gamza, daughter *Rachel* 30 & grandson *Troy* 3.

We welcome our newly bereaved friends. We are sorry for the cause that brings you. We offer confidentiality, unconditional love, compassion and understanding to all of you.

OCTOBER REFRESHMENTS

Nina Bernstein in memory of my son, *Andrew Voluck* whose birthday is October 12th

Diana Clark in memory of my grandson, *Alexander*, whose birthday is Oct 16th, & all our children.

Anyone wishing to donate refreshments (cheese & crackers, fruit, cakes, cookies, etc.) in memory of loved ones, please call **Ann or Rhonda (484)919-0820**, or sign the chart on the refreshment table

LOVE GIFTS

Nancy and David Norris Book donation: "Sweet Pain (Joy on the Road Less Traveled)" written by Nancy & David, who were members of our chapter in their early grief, in loving memory of their son *Nathaniel*.

Ann Murray Book donation. "If I Could Mend Your Heart" written by Mary I. Farr, in loving memory of my sons *Jonathon & Brian*.

Meyer Bobrow Family Foundation, Inc. in loving memory of *Steven Schneibolk* son of **Pamela Schneibolk** and grandson of **Marie & Ken Hofmockel**.

Victoria Bayle in memory of my son, Bobby whose birthday is Oct 5th.

Nina Bernstein in memory of my beloved son, *Andrew Voluck* whose birthday is Oct 12th.

Stephen & Barbara Billings in memory of our daughter, *Laura Elizabeth Billings* whose birthday is Nov 26th

Joyce Caperilla in memory of my daughter, *Jennifer Caperilla* whose anniversary is Nov 22nd.

Harold & Marcia Epstein in memory of our grandson, *Andrew Voluck* whose birthday is Oct 12th.

JoAnne Forman in remembrance of my beloved son, *Scott Hartman* whose birthday & anniversary is Nov 11th. He is deeply missed by me and his sister, his cousins and his aunt.

JoAnne & Thomas Lennen in loving memory of our son, *Scott C. Lennen* on his 46th birthday. Always in our thoughts, forever in our hearts. Mom & Dad.

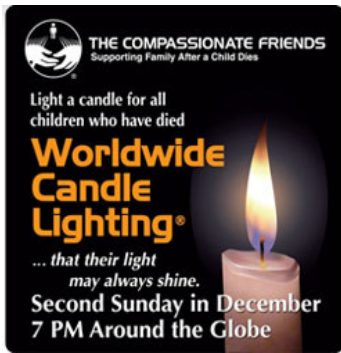
Robert & Jean McWilliams in loving memory of our daughter, *Jean Marie Opella* on her 3rd anniversary (Sep) & 40th birthday (Nov).

Anthony & Mary Morrell in loving memory of our beloved son *Andrew Morell* on his 42nd birthday.

Tony & Laurene Quercetti in loving memory of our daughter, *Tina Quercetti* on the 15th anniversary of her joining the heavenly angels. We remember all of the great Halloween costumes, especially "Cher". We love and miss you.

Marie & Sam Schmeltzer in loving memory of our son, *Sam "Sonny" Schmeltzer* whose anniversary is Sep 11th.

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS WORLD WIDE CANDLE LIGHTING



Held annually the second Sunday in December, this year December 13th, The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe as they light candles for one hour to honor and remember children who have died at any age from any cause. As candles are lit at 7 p.m. local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor children in a way that transcends all ethnic, cultural, religious, and political boundaries.

The Valley Forge Chapter of The Compassionate Friends will hold a remembrance service on December 13th at 2 PM, at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in the fellowship hall (same place our monthly sharing secessions are held). We also urge you to light a candle in your home at 7PM.

We chose 2 PM for our local service so that it would be available to everyone, including those who do not drive at night. We hope you will take this opportunity to join us in remembering our children who have died, but will never be forgotten. Let us ensure that their light may always shine.

SPEAKER: Dr. Yvonne Kaye

Dr. Yvonne Kaye is an international speaker with a wide range of subjects, including post traumatic stress disorder and bereavement, specializing in the death of children. She is a certified Thanatologist, veteran radio talk show host, author, columnist and Interfaith Minister, believing in the power of the human spirit. Involved with long term illness and crises, Dr. Kaye is a strong advocate of humour and spirituality. She uses her own life experiences as a basis for her work. She is a Spiritual Coach and her philosophy is "Laughter is the miracle healer". Dr. Kaye received the prestigious Matty Muir Award 2005 for work with victims of crime.

Dr. Yvonne Kaye has given much support for many years to The Compassionate Friends. She has been a speaker on numerous subjects at many varied occasions of TCF Chapters in our area. Dr. Kaye has often been a keynote speaker at Regional, National and International Conference of TCF

www.yvonnekaye.com - irrevrev@comcast.net - 215-393-5464

We offer our compassion to the family of **Carole Katz**, who died September 19th. Carole had been very dedicated to The Compassionate Friends for the past 26 years. She published the Cape Cod chapter newsletter for 19 years. Carole helped manage the National TCF Conference Book Store for many years. She received the National Appreciation Award in 2004. Carole was predeceased in 2007 by her husband, **George Katz**. She published a book "Laurie, Laurie, Halleluiah" after the death of her daughter, **Laurie**, in 1980.

RECORD KEEPER CHANGE

Diana Clark has volunteered to be the new Database Record Keeper for the Valley Forge Chapter. We are grateful for help in maintaining the records, which is a vital part of our organization. Diana became a member of the chapter in June of this year. Her grandson Alexander, died April 2009. We welcome her to our Steering Committee which consists of volunteers who conduct the chapter's business. Since there is NO paid personnel at the chapter level, we are particularly appreciative of those who volunteer to extend themselves to reach out to offer help to other bereaved families.

We extend our thanks and appreciation to **Frank Gomez** who has been very dedicated in maintaining records for the Valley Forge Chapter since May 2005. He has been very responsible and diligent in keeping the database current, this requires daily entries. He initiated the emailing of the newsletter in a very timely fashion to those members who requested it be sent electronically, instead of by bulk mail, which saves the chapter expenses of printing and mailing . Frank also created a Web Site for the Valley Forge Chapter, which he will still maintain. Frank & Rhonda Gomez joined our chapter shortly after the death of their son, Frankie in 2003. They both have been a tremendous support to the Valley Forge Chapter.

CHAPTER LIBRARY NEW BOOKS

New books were purchased, at the National Conference in Portland, Oregon for our library. Listed below are the titles, author, and purchase price. Often times bereaved families want to give a memorial in memory of a loved one, but don't have the ability to decide what to dedicate. We are offering these books to be given as a memorial.

If you wish, you may purchase any of these books for use in our library. There will be a memorial sticker with your loved one's name, and you as the donor placed inside the cover.

1. A Guide to Understanding Guilt During Bereavement, Robert Baugher, PhD (\$15.99)
2. A Passage Through Grief - An Interactive Journal, Barbara Baum Gardner (\$15.99)
3. After Suicide Loss (Coping With Your Grief), Bob Baugher, PhD and Jack Jordan, PhD (\$10.00)
4. Companionship for the Bereaved, Alan D. Wolfelt (\$29.95)
5. Coping With Traumatic Death: Homicide, Bob Baugher, PhD and Lew Cox (\$7.00)
6. I Wasn't Ready To Say Goodbye, Brook Noel and Pamela D. Blair, PhD (\$14.95)
7. If I Could Mend Your Heart, Mary I. Farr - **This book has a designated donor.**
8. Lifetimes - the beautiful way to explain death to children, Bryan Mellonie & Robert Ingpen (\$14)
9. The Bereaved Grandparents, Margaret H. Gerner (\$4.95)
10. The Fall of Freddie the Leaf, Leo Buscaglia, PhD (\$15.95)
11. Tracks of a Fellow Struggler, John R. Claypool (\$15.99)
12. Understanding Anger During Bereavement, Bob Baugher, PhD, Carol Hankins, MS, and Gary Hankins, PhD (\$8.00)

OUR CHILDREN & SIBLINGS LOVED, SADLY MISSED AND REMEMBERED

Each month some of us must face those special, but difficult days of birthdays and anniversaries. This Month we ask your thoughts and prayers for the parents/siblings/relatives of the following children: **Additions or corrections to this list should be given to the editors, Marie & Ken Hofmockel.**

We will no longer list the birth and death years of deceased persons in our newsletter. We have concerns this information could be misused, and result in an adversity for the families.

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Jim Bailey, son *Brendan Bailey* 11/11
Gloria Bello, son *Joseph* 11/24
Jackie & Steve Brown, son *Doug Brown* 11/28
Catherine Chan, son *Chanlan Lee* 11/27
Tom & Irene Cornely, daughter *Colleen* 11/1
Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Cox, daughter *Christen Fox* 11/2
Antoinette & John DiDonato, son *John Jr* 11/24
JoAnne Forman, son *H. Scott Hartman, Jr.* 11/21
Sharon & Francis Gailey, daughter *Danielle Marie Gailey* 11/7
Angela Giannantonio, son *Anthony* 11/11
Charlotte and Michael Gormish, brother *Douglas Moyer* 11/9
Anthony & Carol Iacobucci, son *Anthony Iacobucci* 11/28
Enid M. Irizarry, daughter *Lisette M. Molina* 11/16
Vern & Joyce Kaiser, son *Brian* 11/9
Luann Kalamon, son *Adam Michael* 11/12
Sandi Kensicki, sister *Rose* 11/3
John & Ilene Kostic, son *John E* 11/29
Rhoda & Melvin Kreiner, daughter *Anna Kreiner* 11/19
Joanne & Thomas Lennen, son *Scott C. Lennen* 11/14
Marie MacCaughern, daughter *Theresa Peazzoni* 11/7
Robert & Jean McWilliams, daughter *Jean Marie Opella* 11/20
Leonard & Thelma Miller, sister *Geraldine Weiner* 11/04
Joan Morefield, son *Robert* 11/25
Anthony & Mary Morrell, son *Andrew Michael Morrell* 11/28
David & Donna Morrell, son *Matthew Morrell* 11/9
Deone Morrison, son *Tod Morrison* 11/5
Fred & Marilyn Mountjoy, daughter *Marian Mountjoy* 11/11
Betsy Oakes, son *Bruce Schaeffer* 11/19
Carol & Dennis O'Connor, son *Michael O'Connor* 11/21
Patricia Peraino, brother *Anthony* 11/11
Robert & Barbara Pontician, son *Rob Pontician* 11/28
Roy Redman, daughter *Carol* 11/20
Ilene & Sy Rockower, daughter *Amy Rockower* 11/22
Shirley Sabantini, daughter *Phyllis Ledden* 11/1
Melissa Schnitzler, brother *Richard "Jon" Masso* 11/7

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS continued

Priscilla Shober, son *Gregory Shober* 11/7
Edie Smith, son *John Seddon "Sed" Wilson* 11/15
Shuchi & Peter Stanger, sister *Urvi Thanawala* 11/2
Elaine & Tim Thomas, son *Seth Peterson* 11/21
Marilyn Toole, son *Ted Toole* 11/3
Weldon & Marie Tyson, son *Ronald C. Stewart* 11/12
Harry & Lynne Urian, son *Mike* 11/14
Emanuel and Claudia Utti, stepson *Richard "Jon" Masso* 11/7
Linda Weaver, son *Damon Weaver* 11/21
Paul & Marcia Woodruff, son *Danny Woodruff* 11/23

NOVEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Nancy Althouse, daughter *Donna Lee Althouse* - 11/4
Victoria Bayle, husband *Robert D Bayle II* - 11/9/06
Julie Beasley, son *Aaron* - 11/5
Stephen & Barbara Billings, daughter *Laura Elizabeth Billings* - 11/26
John & Joyce Bryant, son *John Russell Bryant* - 11/9
Regina Buckingham, son *Brian J. Buckingham* - 11/16
Scott & Gail Campbell, daughter *Chelsea* - 11/4
Joyce Caperilla, daughter *Jennifer* - 11/22
Libby Cavallaro, sister *Theresa* - 11/19
Loreta & Ken Cericola, son *Anthony Cericola* - 11/10
Christopher Ciunci, sister *Elizabeth* - 11/26
Thomas & Janet Cleary, son *Ryan* - 11/14
Benjamin E. Cohen, daughter *Donna Lynne Cohen* - 11/22
Anita Conway, son *Daniel* - 11/29
Maura & Chuck Dombroski, son *Paul Dombroski* - 11/14
Julie & Joe Fabrizio, brother *John Russel Bryant* - 11/9
Rochena & Pat Fatale, son *Mark Longan* - 11/15
Abigail Figueroa, son *Jose C Figueroa* - 11/11
JoAnne Forman, son *H. Scott Hartman, Jr.* - 11/12
Mary B. Frederick, son *Michael W. Frederick* - 11/3
Sharon & Francis Gailey, son *Francis E. Gailey, III* - 11/24
Linda & Steven Gilbert, daughter *Pamela Gilbert* - 11/6
Laura Giordano, son *Peter* - 11/7
Elizabeth Haney, son *Christian* - 11/28
Othell & William Heaney, son *Roger Heaney* - 11/22
Nora & Peter Heiss, daughter *Kathleen Heiss McCaughan* - 11/23
daughter *Noreen Schmucker* - 11/27

NOVEMBER ANNIVERSARIES — continued

Carl & Catherine Helwig, son *Michael Helwig* - 11/24
Danielle Hemmench Ricci, boyfriend *Ryan* - 11/14
Jacob & Rachel Himmelstein, son *Benjamin Himmelstein* - 11/19
Cynthia Hornyak, daughter *Meredith* - 11/27
Vern & Joyce Kaiser, son *Brian* - 11/2
John & Ilene Kostic, son *John E* - 11/18
Joe & Barbara Ladd, son *William "Bill" F. Ladd* - 11/12
Mary Leech, daughter *Phyliss Leech* - 11/15
Ed & Linda Lincul, son *Matthew* - 11/27
Jennifer & Michael Magee, sister *Jacqueline Ann Rogers* - 11/7
Alexandra Milas, daughter *Nicole Penelope Wiseley* - 11/5
Pat Miller, son *Nathan* - 11/8
Leonard & Thelma Miller, sister *Geraldine Weiner* - 11/13
Audrey Morasco, husband *John J. Morasco* - 11/19
Rose & Mike Orlando, son *Michael* - 11/21
Diane Perrymore, son *Keith* - 11/1
Sheldon & Joan Plam, son *Michael Tobiah Plam* - 11/7
Tony & Laurene Quercetti, daughter *Christine L. Quercetti* - 11/7
Trish & Bell Rich, daughter *Renee Rich* - 11/23
Ruth Richardson, grandson *Nicholas Richardson* - 11/14
Gina & Brian Richardson, son *Nicholas Richardson* - 11/14
Jacqueline Rider, son *Josua Rider* - 11/25
Skipp & Kathy Robinson, daughter *Carrie Robinson* - 11/16
Mike & Diane Rogers, daughter *Jacqueline Ann Rogers* - 11/7
Donald & Mary Rose, daughter *Marjorie Rose-Cotteta* - 11/24
Priscilla Shober, son *Gregory Shober* - 11/3
Barry & Sigrid Snow, son *Kevin Snow* - 11/26
Jen & Alex Soutos, daughter *Alexi* - 11/22
Harry & Merrily Spiess, son *F. Ryan Spiess* - 11/29
Jerry & Ann Timinski, daughter *Janelle Ann Timinski* - 11/24
Esperanza & Libardo Toro, daughter *Maria Eugenia Toro* - 11/3
Mary Walker, daughter *Susan* - 11/19
George & Helen Warriner, son *David J. Warriner, Sr.* - 11/19
Dorothy Washington, daughter *Michele Washington* - 11/26
Linda Weaver, daughter *Krista "Binky" Weaver* - 11/4
Elinor Wenk, son *Raymond Wenk, Jr.* - 11/23
Bill & Patti Whitehead, daughter *Maria* - 11/1
Robin Zelenak, brother *Ronny Auch* - 11/15

GIFTS FOR FIRST STEP

First Step is a program of Chester County for under privileged/handicapped children. For many years our Chapter has collected gifts for them. We will do so again this year, you may bring your gifts to our December 6th monthly meeting, or at the Remembrance Service on December 9th. The children are between the ages of 2 and 6. Both clothing and toys are welcome gifts. Please do not wrap gifts. It is very rewarding to remember your child, by showing love to these children. You may sign it, "from your friend", or your child or sibling's name. This may be the only gift the child will receive. We appreciate your participation in this worthy cause.

SHARED THOUGHTS ON CELEBRATING THANKSGIVING WHILE GRIEVING

For many of us, fall means the time of year to be in awe of all the beautiful colors of nature, and to give thanks for our many blessings. When our child or sibling dies, our eyes still see nature's beauty, but our hearts are in too much pain to feel, appreciate, or enjoy anything. The Thanksgiving holiday seems almost unacceptable to many newly bereaved. It is very difficult to give thanks, when one of our greatest blessings has been taken from us, and the gut-wrenching pain is with us every moment.

We now know how precious the gift of life is. We are more appreciative of our surviving family, and find the dreaded anticipation of not having our whole family together for our traditional Thanksgiving adds to our grief. This is not a time to shelter others from our pain. Not being honest can give false messages, and confuses others who want to help us. Friends and extended family members frequently think they know what is always best for us. Their advice may only be best for them, by easing their pain and pretending you are capable of handling more than you can.

It is important to include immediate family members in your holiday planning. Don't try to read their minds. You are showing respect and acknowledging their pain by getting their input. They, too, have apprehensions of up coming holidays, and need to have open verbal communication.

If you plan to be with friends or extended family, it may be wise to give advance notice that you may not be able to "keep it together". If you plan to have people in, try to let others help you prepare the dinner. You may want to deviate from traditions. Only you can decide what is best for you. Ask friends to accept your decision. We kept all our traditions, but that may not be best for you. We still had our surviving children at home, and it seemed important to hold to our seasonal celebrations.

Even though it is difficult to count blessings, we need to communicate with our feelings. Family, friends, and relationships are always at the top of our list of things to be thankful for. Next came material things, which now seem so trivial, and not even worth enumerating. "Things" don't belong on the same page anymore. Most of us have learned a new meaning about life. What a waste it would be if we endured all this pain and agony, and did not become a more caring person. We also have a new understanding of the word "Compassion", and have learned to reach out to those who need us.

We should not minimize our pain. It often prevents us from counting our blessings, and that is very normal during our early grief. The intense pain blocks out everything. We should feel no guilt for having normal human reactions. Allow yourselves to grieve and cry, it is very healing.

There are no shortcuts to get through our grief. But, it will get softer, and tolerable, and we learn how to handle the holidays. I could not believe this in my fresh grief. I have healed more than I ever thought possible. All memories were so painful. One of the things I am most thankful for is that I can now remember beautiful times with Doug, without having intense pain. I feel and hope you will also have this blessing one day.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel*, TCF Valley Forge

MY RESPONSE TO MY BROTHER'S DEATH

Two things happened to me on January 11, 1992. I lost my brother to death and I lost my parents to grief. My dad, the one who seemed to always have the answers to my questions, the "rock" in the family whose job it was to fix everything, completely lost it. The fear, anger, and shock in his eyes when told that my brother had died are engraved in my memory. Falling limp in my mother's and my arms in the emergency room of UCLA Medical Center was the first time I had ever seen my parents lose control. At that moment our roles switched.

"I'll take them," I said to the nurse with the bag labeled "EDLER." The bag held the personal belongings of my brother. I quietly took them and put them in my car. For the next three months, I seemed to make many of the decisions. I was not the courageous leader rising up to the occasion; I was the least common denominator. My parents, although they tried, could not help me. They were trying to deal with tremendous grief themselves.

For this reason, I put off dealing with Mark's death for many months. I cried and I felt sad but, never addressed my grief. My friends were concerned and asked how I was doing but, unless you have been there, no one really wants to hear the true answers. My brother was the only other person who was a combination of my mom and dad. My friends could not relate to my brother's death nor would I want them to. I would never wish this experience upon anyone. But, this left me alone to deal with it and I chose to put it off.

After three months, I met a gentleman at a family retreat with a group my dad was a part of. This guy, Kevin, lost his brother to suicide about nine months earlier. He was further along in his "coping" than I was. I could talk to him about Mark, mention Mark's name and share stories without making the whole room uncomfortable. I saw in him someone who was dealing with his grief and it gave me hope. There's a certain vocabulary that you acquire after suffering a loss that no book, no story, and no amount of explaining can do justice to. I don't talk about certain things with my friends. I do not have the time or the energy to explain (or try and explain) the many feelings I am having. Kevin understood. He had the vocabulary. This was the first step in healing. I came to grips with the reality of my new life. Different than the one before but there was no going back. At this point I went on autopilot. I remember many of the events of the three years following Mark's death. My girlfriend and I broke up. My parents moved to a new house. I went through the many firsts but just kept moving forward. However, I was not depressed. My lows were not very low, but, my highs were not very high.

I became involved with The Compassionate Friends Sibling Division, in my third year. I did it half out of responsibility to my parents and half out of the knowledge that if I were running the meeting, then I would be in control of how much sharing I needed to put into it. It was kind of a control thing. To my surprise the meetings have become so beneficial to my healing that I am surprised at myself. By sharing with other, I feel that I help them and in turn myself. Many feelings, thoughts and emotions that I thought were just with me, I found are universal with others. After three years I began to come "out of the valley" I can only say that by looking back. Hindsight has allowed me to see the role of being strong for our family because I felt that was best. Many others I have talked to have mentioned a similar reaction. Your parents are barely able to deal with their own grief. The last thing you want to do is bring more pain on them, so, you don't share with your parents.

In July 1996 at The Compassionate Friends National Conference, many parents walked up to me and asked "How do I know if my son (daughter) is dealing with this? I am concerned since they do not tell me anything." "You don't know," I answered, "and neither do I." But, unless you see something obviously dangerous, they are dealing with it in their own way at their own speed and you may not be a part of their grieving."

Now I have a different outlook on life. It is precious. I feel that in my new life I am closer to my parents. Each one of us has to live our lives one third better in my brother's memory. I value my friends and time more. I can handle stress much better. I have become a better person by helping others. I like the new person I have become. But, I would trade it all in a second to have my brother back.

Rick Edler TCF South Bay/LA, CA

(Rick's 18 year old brother, Mark, his only sibling, accidentally fell from a wall at UCLA where he was attending school. Rick is 4 years older than his brother.)

A BIRTHDAY THAT NEVER CAME

(for my daughter Krista)

A birthday that never came for my daughter Krista
the one I would have loved so much.

The balloons, and decorations all over the room
with the cake decked out so great,

Presents wrapped up in beautiful wrapping paper
with the lovely bows on top,

Not knowing of the surprise that was inside those great gifts
only, if there was a birthday.

Those days would never come --
for the Lord took my daughter away from us too early.

When my daughter was a month old
we had a party for her,

And to be honest we let her wear the cake.

If we only had a camera that day,
it would have been so special to me and her.

Now my Binky is gone --
she will always be in my heart.

May God bless my Binky.

For as long as my daughter was on this earth,
I will always remember her as my "Binky".

Born April 29, 1975 - Died November 4, 1975.

Linda Weaver
TCF - Valley Forge Chapter

BE KIND TO YOURSELF

There will always be times when
it's hard to remember your strengths.
These are the times when you need to
give yourself special attention.

Be kind to yourself...
Kindness nurtures and gives hope to
growing dreams.

Respect yourself...
Listen to your needs, and treat yourself
as you would a friend.

Encourage yourself...
Remember what you truly want, and
fight for it as you would your life.

Appreciate yourself...
Don't take for granted the qualities that
make you unique.

Focus yourself...
It is with discipline and motivation that
you will move towards your goals.

Be giving towards yourself...
In that way your strength will thrive, and
you'll be realizing your goals a day at a
time.

Gail Mutterperl

BUT IT HURTS DIFFERENTLY

There is no way to predict how you will feel. The reactions of grief are not like recipes with given ingredients and certain results. Each person mourns in a different way.

You may cry hysterically, or you may remain outwardly controlled, showing little emotion. You may lash out in anger against your family and friends, or you may express your gratitude for their concern and dedication.

You may be calm one moment ... in turmoil the next. Reactions are varied and contradictory. Grief is universal. At the same time it is extremely personal. Heal in your own way.

Earl Grollman, from "Living when a Loved One Has Died"

For those of you who are newly bereaved, it is difficult to be thankful. But for us who are further removed from the poignant early stages of grief, and have found the pain has softened, may find Darcie's thoughts very helpful.

FOR THAT, I AM THANKFUL

It doesn't seem to get any better ...
but it doesn't get any worse either.
For that, I am thankful.

There are no more pictures to be taken ...
but there are memories to be cherished.
For that, I am thankful.

There is a missing chair at the table ...
But the circle of family gathers close.
For that, I am thankful.

The turkey is smaller ...
but there is still stuffing.
For that, I am thankful.

The days are shorter ...
but the nights are softer.
For that, I am thankful.

The pain is still there ...
but it last only moments.
For that, I am thankful.

The calendar still turns,
The holidays still appear
And they still cost too much ...
but I am still here.
For that, I am thankful.

The room is still empty,
The soul still aches ...
but the heart remembers.
For that, I am thankful.

The guests still come,
The dishes pile up ...
but the dishwasher works.
For that, I am thankful.

The name is still missing,
The words still unspoken ...
but the silence is shared.
For that, I am thankful.

The snow still falls,
The sled still waits,
and the spirit still wants to ...
For that, I am thankful.

The stillness remains ...
but the sadness is smaller.
For that, I am thankful.

The moment is gone ...
but the love is forever.
For that, I am blessed,
For that, I am grateful ...

Love was once (and still is)
A part of my being ...
For that, I am living.

I am LIVING ...
and for that, I am thankful.

May your holidays be filled
with reasons to be thankful.
Having loved and having been loved
is perhaps the most wondrous reason
of all. *Darcie D. Sims*