



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Newsletter

Volume 40 No. 4 April 2019

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POSTAGE

JAMES and ANITA BENNETT in memory of BRANDON BENNETT
JAMES and ANITA BENNETT in memory of SHANNON BENNETT
PAUL BROOME in memory of CYNTHIA BROOME
ED and CAROLYN BUCHANAN in memory of ASHLEY BUCHANAN
VIRGINIA HORTON in memory of ANDREW THOMAS STANLEY
LISA LUCAS in memory of ERIC LUCAS
JERRY and CINDY WIGGLESWORTH in memory of LEE WIGGLESWORTH

LOVE GIFT

EARL and GERTRUDE DAWSON in memory of DEBRA FORTNER
GREG LITTLE in memory of DREW LITTLE
BETTY WALKER in memory of JONATHAN WALKER

SECURITY SERVICES

KNIGHT and PATRICIA BRUCE in memory of DANIEL BRUCE (birthday 04/23)
WILEY and WANDA FISHER in memory of DANIEL MERRITT FISHER (birthday 04/10)
WILEY and WANDA FISHER in memory of RYAN FISHER KNIGHT (birthday 04/30)

CHILDREN'S MEMORIAL

KNIGHT and PATRICIA BRUCE in memory of DANIEL BRUCE (birthday 04/23)
CHUCK and MARLISE PRESTWOOD in memory of KRISSY PRESTWOOD

The Compassionate Friends THANK YOU for your donations

They are tax deductible and deeply appreciated.

Printing of TCF Monthly Newsletter: Courtesy of BLUE CROSS/BLUE SHIELD OF MS

My Thoughts

Our group is certainly saddened to hear of a member of our group family whose mountain was just too much to keep climbing. As this is something that we all struggle with since the loss of our children, I will add some commentary that was in his obituary and since it was public, I think it will be okay. It is certainly a tribute to him. I will also be adding some of my own thoughts.

A little background, he and his wife had three sons and through the course of time lost all three of these sons. I am going to include some of the thoughts in his obituary which was so poignant.

"Our friend died on his own battlefield. He was killed in action fighting a civil war. He fought against adversaries of sorrow and tragedy that took toll of his energies and endurance. At last these adversaries overwhelmed him. And it appeared that he lost the war. But did he? I see a host of victories that he has won!

He won our admiration, we give him credit on the battlefield. We give him credit for the courage, pride, and hope that he used as his weapons as long as he could. We shall remember not his death, but his daily victories gained through his kindness and thoughtfulness, through his love for family and friends, for sports, the outdoors and his zest to have fun.

He celebrated his friends and was always there with a helping hand. He was loved by many and was blessed to have such good friends. We shall remember the many days that he was victorious over overwhelming obstacles. We shall remember not the years we thought he had left, but the intensity with which he lived the years he had. Only God knows what we suffer in the silent skirmishes that take place in our soul, but our consolation is that God knows and does understand.

Our group is not "per se" a religious group (we want all to come and feel welcome) but for those of us that are believers of an afterlife we know that he is now in the loving hands of God and with his three precious sons where there is no sorrow and where he is surely happy and wanted to be. Even in his sorrow, he was among the first to comfort anyone who needed comfort when he was at a meeting of our group of grieving parents/grandparents/supporters. As grieving parents, we no longer fear death because we know our precious children will once again be in our arms, as well as our other loves ones we have lost along life's journey.

Many years ago my sister's husband's sister had three sons and her youngest died in a car accident. Even though B. J. tried to go on with life and live for her husband, other two sons and grandchildren, she was unable to. She eventually took to her bed and died of a broken heart. Scientists are finding that broken heart syndrome is a very real illness.

Marcia Lfteroff
 Director
 TCF/Jackson, MS

MY BASKET OF BURDENS

My basket of burdens
 Is filled with the grief of my loss
 It is so heavy to carry
 Although this road I must cross

This pathway through life
 Feels unbearable at times
 And I don't have the strength
 For this mountain to climb.

The Basket's filled with sorrow
 Oh, how I miss my love
 At first, it's impossible to carry,
 Where is my help from above?

It's draining my strength
 I can't do anymore
 This pain goes so deep
 Right down to my core.

As I carry this Basket
 I'll learn to manage the weight
 Each step of the way
 Will become easier "they say".

But how do they know,
 Have they been here before?
 If so, where's their Basket
 They're responsible for?

This Basket of burdens
 You can't see and can't touch
 I carry it inside me
 This pain is too much.

Patience is needed to carry
 This loss that I feel
 A shoulder to lean on
 So, someday I will heal

God sent my family
 My friends and spirits unknown
 So, I won't carry this Basket
 For-ever alone.

Someday, I'll lay down my Basket
 With burdens' no more
 My pain will be gone
 When, I cross through that door.

Then I'll know reason
 For my Basket of Burdens
 How God showed me His grace
 When I couldn't cope with the season

Love and support that He gave
 When His presence felt unknown
 He was with me each step
 When I felt so alone

To me, this is what our TCF family is about. Support, love and caring. We never know when we can be the lifeline that someone is needing. But if that mountain just gets too big to climb, it is not a flaw or someone giving up. It is someone who gave it their all, both to themselves and others, and the mountain was just too steep.

Marcia Lfteroff

Catching Butterflies

It often hurt to come upon reminders of
my son
Tho' often since I lost him I would search
around for one
Which always brought on sadness and
the tears that I would shed
Were caused by names or faces, all
things that I would dread.

But then one day I came upon a man
who'd lost his son
I found that things I ran from,
he wouldn't even shun.
But rather he would treasure, and I said
I wondered why
He told me that he called them
"Catching Butterflies."

This view of his intrigued me; I wanted
to hear more
And learned that he took all of them and
carefully would store
All of the reminders that I chose to push
away
He would tuck deep down inside his heart
each and every day.

Now a name or likeness when catching
me off guard
Does not upset me as it did and
I don't find it hard
For now, instead I see these times as
opportunities
To see my son awakened in these new
fresh memories.

*Dottie Williams
TCF Pittsburgh PA*



SEARCHING . . .

Once again, my list has vanished;
it was here, but now it's missing.
Keys and glasses disappearing;
books and letters--overdue.
I'm forever searching, searching,
they must be here, and I need them!
Could it be that what is missing,
what I want this very minute--
could it be that what I'm *REALLY* searching for,
my child,
is you?

*Joyce Andrews
TCF Sugar Land, TX*



The Sign

As a little boy Jody loved to pick Black-eyed Susans. He'd pick those wild flowers and bring them to me with such love and pride in presentation. The last bunch he picked for me was on my birthday before his death, August 4, 1976.

The Black-eyed Susan is an independent wild flower that cannot be forced to grow out of season. The growing period for these wild flowers is the middle of June to the middle of August. But there, the first of September in the year of my son's death, in the center of Jody's grave, was a single perfectly formed Black-eyed Susan. It stood with strength and reassurance. It was all alone in the still, unsettled dirt covering the grave. There was not even a blade of grass or a single weed around.

I wept with mixed emotions of intense loss and love, feeling both distance and closeness, sadness and sudden relief. I saw it as a sign from my darling Jody. It spoke to me words from my dead child. "Do not cry. Do not despair. I love you and never intended for you to suffer so much. Please forgive me, and please be happy with the rest of your life. Please believe that I'm okay and at peace."

Whether it was a sign from Jody or from God, perhaps a bird dropped a Black-eyed Susan seed on the fresh grave, it brought me relief. I felt that my son wasn't so far away, and that his spirit would always be with me.

If nothing more, it helped me to begin to think of Jody there at the gravesite. He was dead, and I began to accept that. I started to realize that I would never again see his form as I had known it. But his spirit would be close and would guide me. I would not forget him and what we shared. He would always be special. What we gave to one another, what we had meant to each other, would not die or diminish with the passage of years, and it has not.

Each year since Jody's death, a single Black-eyed Susan has grown on his grave. It is a comfort and a joy. It is a remarkable phenomenon that now makes me smile rather than cry. Joey was a kid who never forgot my birthday, and never outgrew giving his mom flowers. I choose to believe he still hasn't. There are many mysteries in life and death that can't be explained, and I think shouldn't be, just accepted.

*Susan White-Bowden
In memory of Jody
"From a Healing Heart"*

My April Child

When our daughters were growing up the arrival of springtime was a favorite time of the year, filled with anticipation of the coming of special days of family fun. The freshness of the air, the brilliant colors of spring time trees and flowers, and the song of the birds returned from their winter retreat resounded the message of hope and that life was good. We had survived another cold, snowy Michigan winter and were soon to be rewarded with blue sky, sunshine and temperatures well above freezing!

Birthdays in our family were a time of celebration together. Each year Larry, Anna, Debbie and I, and perhaps a friend or two, would celebrate Anna's April birthday by dining at her favorite Mexican restaurant. There would be lots of silliness and laughter. During her teenage years, Anna would always forewarn us not to have the staff come to our table to sing their crazy birthday song. Of course, since we always insisted that our role as parents was to embarrass our children, her threats and warnings could not stop our tomfoolery. I believe she secretly enjoyed the attention.

As Mother's Day approached, we looked forward again to spending the day together as a family. We would attend church, go out for my favorite brunch, have lots of conversation, fill our bellies to the max, laugh until we cried, be silly, make memories... That was before...

Then the unthinkable happened. My April child died. How could those special days of love and togetherness, laughter and fun become among the most dreaded days a mother must face? How could those days that we had once anticipated with joy and excitement bring such unbelievable heartache and confusion, loneliness and tears?

During those first few years we were simply lost. This was new, undesired, and certainly not requested, territory that we had been forced to enter. What were we supposed to do? How were we supposed to act? I just wanted to run away on her birthday. For several years we did just that. With hearts filled with the numbness of fresh grief, our restructured family of three would hop in the car and head out-of-town. We would spend the day busying ourselves with whatever it took to survive. We would laugh half-heartedly, share memories, or cry together as we struggled to discover our new identity as a family without Anna's physical presence.

As always, only a few short weeks following Anna's birthday Mother's Day would arrive right on schedule. The traditions we had come to love and enjoy became intensely painful. It became an impossible task to attend church services or go out for brunch. Seeing families enjoying their togetherness pierced my heart with an endless ache.



(My April Child cont.)

My tear-filled eyes burned at the thought of being surrounded by "intact" families. Feelings of anger and resentment overwhelmed my heart. On the inside I wanted to lash out at all those mothers and fathers who were surrounded by all of their children and those sisters and brothers who had no clue what it would be like to lose a sibling. As the day drew to a close, I felt tremendous relief that it was over. Exhausted, I would lay silently with my head on my pillow as quiet tears lulled me to sleep.

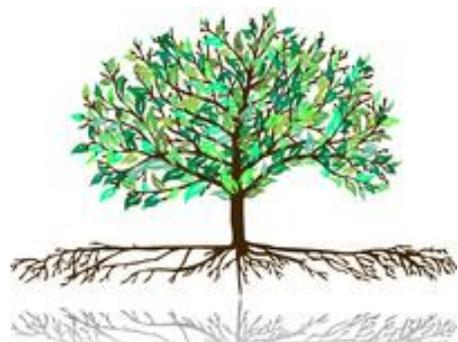
It seems impossible that it has been nine birthdays and nine Mothers' Days since Anna died. In my heart it was only yesterday. I can still see her smile and hear her laugh. I can feel the warmth of a quick hug as she heads out the door. With each passing year comes a new reality of what it means to be a bereaved parent, of what it means to find a new normal for our lives. The pain continues to occasionally catch me off guard, but it is softer now. The tears still come, but less frequently.

Warm memories bring joyful moments to the emptiness. I smile quietly to myself, reassured that Anna lives on in our hearts and lives, as well as in the hearts and lives of those around us. Once again each April we celebrate the day of her birth, for her life has been a gift of unimaginable joy. Our traditional Mother's Day rituals have changed to new ones. There is more laughter now, fewer painful tears. I rejoice that I can celebrate that I am Debbie's Mom, and now Scott's mother-in-law, as well! Life is good.

The winter has been long and cold, as has been the winter of our grief. Springtime has arrived. The sunshine and blue sky, the purple crocus and yellow daffodils pushing through the warming earth bring hope of renewal and reassurance that life continues. Although there is an irreparable hole in my soul and an emptiness in my heart that will never leave, I am forever grateful that Anna lived with us for 23 years. I am eternally thankful that I am and I always will be Anna's Mom. May the warmth and brilliance of springtime fill your hearts with times of peace and hope and love.

"In the midst of winter I found within myself an invincible summer." Albert Camus

Paula Funk
TCF Safe Harbor Chapter, MI
In loving memory of my daughter, Anna





OUR CHILDREN—LOVED, MISSED & REMEMBERED

“They may be deceased by a few days or years, but we still miss them so much and still shed our tears.”

Birth Date	Child’s name	Parent’s name(s)	Cause
04/01	Jack Johnson	Thomas/Brigette Johnson	
04/02	Ryan Dewayne Thomas	Dwayne/Linda Thomas	Auto accident
04/05	Christopher Scott Brandies	Martha T. Wiggins	Suicide
04/05	Doug Albritton	Mary Ellen Albritton	Auto accident
04/07	David Vantrease, Jr.	Leah Wheelless	Suicide
04/08	Houston Wells, Jr.	Mrs. Jean Wells	Gunshot wound
04/10	Daniel Merritt Fisher	Wiley/Wanda Fisher	Tractor Rollover
04/12	Andrea Santana Brown	Pamela Brown	
04/12	Mitch Dickens	Nancy/Bill Dickens	Automobile accident
04/13	Marjorie Mae Bowen	Gerald/Norma Jean Kimbel	Accidental drowning
04/13	Ronnie Strickland	Kaye Toney	Steven Johnson Syndrome
04/13	Ronnie Strickland	Daisy Strickland	Steven Johnson Syndrome
04/14	Jasen Nathaniel Rodgers	Shanna/Chuck Rodgers	Motorcycle Accident
04/15	Daniel “Dan” Yates	Harry Larue/Marilyn Yates	Homicide
04/16	Tyler Thompson	Wayne/Ramee Thompson	Leukemia
04/17	Christopher Guzman	Barbara Sanders	Accidental drug overdose
04/18	Christopher Bryan Burton	Elizabeth Burton	Suicide
04/19	Robert Anderson (Bob)Dugan	Robert/Betsy Dugan	Accidental Drugs
04/19	Colten M. Pigott	Patrick Pigott	Accidental
04/22	Michael Trey Upchurch	Ralph/Sheila Bradshaw	Auto accident
04/23	Matthew Carson Pounders	Dustin Kenneth Pounders	Auto accident
04/23	James Daniel Bruce	Knight/Patricia Bruce	Accidental gunshot
04/26	Kathy “Krystine” Harris	Ms. Kathy Whitehead	Homicide
04/30	Ryan Fisher Knight	Wiley/Wanda Fisher	Auto accident
04/30	Richard Thompson	Wayne/Ramee Thompson	Auto accident

**TCF/Jackson, MS
We Remember**

We were so saddened to learn of the recent passing of one of our own chapter members, Marty Lind.

Marty was preceded in death by his three precious sons, Conner, Tyler, and Preston. Marty came to our group meeting several times with a smile on his face, but a heaviness of heart that one could almost feel. Marty was known as someone who reached out to give a helping hand with a personal touch and will be missed by so many. He was known as having a big smile, and an even bigger heart.

A quote from his obituary states, "His legacy - Live and breathe the courage of your convictions. He lived his faith in humanity heroically helping those in need." Our group and those of us who remember Marty so well remember him as being kind and thoughtful. We will miss you Marty Lind. Please remember Marty's family and friends in your thoughts and prayers.

Please also be remembering our treasurer, Virginia Horton as she has recently had a complete knee replacement. We hope it won't be long before Virginia is able to return to our meetings and we appreciate everything she does for our group in memory of her son, Andrew.

Update on Children's Memorial: We received a call from the Property Committee of Fondren Presbyterian Church that they are ready to proceed with plans to go ahead and move forward with getting the beginnings of the moving and installation of our fountain/statue and we are so excited. We will be talking to concrete finishers, electricians, and other professionals along with Fondren Presbyterian Church Property Committee Members and will be working closely with them as this project begins to take shape. We hope to have more details of everything that is to be done soon and will let everyone know as soon as possible. We ask for understanding, patience, and consideration as this project is being discussed, planned, and carried out. Thank you, and remember, we are continuing to take donations in memory of your precious children.

Faye McCord, TCF/Jackson, MS

OUR CHILDREN—LOVED, MISSED & REMEMBERED

Heaven Date	Child's name	Parent's name(s)	Cause
04/01	Jack Johnson	Thomas/Brigette Johnson	
04/01	Eric McLaughlin	Ethel Duke	Automobile accident
04/03	Jarrold Gray	Sharon LaBatte Williams	Automobile accident
04/03	Ross Allan Hailey	Ben/Charlotte Hailey	Suicide
04/05	Mitch Dickens	Nancy/Bill Dickens	Automobile accident
04/05	Anthony Jerome Blair	Mary Ann Blair	Homicide
04/06	Walter A. Booker	Tom/Gretel Ekbaum	Hit &run/Easter Sunday
04/07	Kristi Diaz	Julie Diaz	Cancer
04/07	Michael Scott Eldridge	Debbie Eldridge	
04/09	Kevin Killebrew	Larry/Mary Killebrew	Car accident
04/09	Travis Casey Macoy	Mary Pierce	
04/12	Robert Anderson (Bob) Dugan	Robert/Betsy Dugan	Accidental Drugs
04/14	Hunter Micheal Baker	Stephanie Baker	Accidental Electrocutation
04/14	Christopher Bryan Burton	Elizabeth Burton	Suicide
04/15	Cristina (Cris) Mann	Peggy Phillips	Cancer
04/16	Andrew Thomas Stanley	Virginia Horton	Suicide
04/18	Dixie Patrice Kendall	Sam/Barbara Kendall	Cancer
04/20	Emmanuel D. Ealy	Mary Horton	
04/21	Brendan Chase Roberts	Deborah Roberts	Auto accident
04/23	Amber Noelle Smith	Sandy Boteler	Homicide
04/23	Amber Smith	Lindsey Crutcher	
04/25	Katherine Graves Morgan	David Morgan	Auto fire (died with mom)
04/28	Nathan Myers	Gaye Myers	Suicide
04/28	Kathleen M. Peck	John/Pat Schnell	Cancer
04/30	Hunter Baker	Paulette Stayham	Accident

REPLY FORM—IMPORTANT

It is important for our children to be remembered. Please understand that in order for your child to be on the "special days" list, you must fill out this form, which gives us permission to list this information.

I/We are bereaved Parents grandparents siblings step-parents friends relatives professional
 Please add remove keep me on the mailing list.
 Remember my Child Sibling Grandchild on Special Days. Please have someone call me.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____

Zip _____

E-mail address _____

Name of Child _____

Age when deceased _____

Cause* _____

Child's Birthday _____ Child's Heaven

Date _____

*You need not list cause of death. We ask this only so that parents whose children have died in similar ways may reach one another.

Optional: Your donations are tax deductible and allow us to reach to other bereaved parents.

Enclosed is \$ _____ given in memory of _____

I would like my contribution used to fund: Check one: Postage Children's Memorial Love Gift

Mail to: The Compassionate Friends; P.O. Box 1396; Jackson, Mississippi; 39215-1396