



JULY and AUGUST 2011



Seattle King County Chapter P.O. Box 66896 Seattle, WA 98166 206-241-1139



CLOUDS



Gean Dindia, TCF, Seattle-King County Chapter, WA

On a Sunday in May she arrived at Church early enough to read the program. The sermon's title was "*The Cloud Appreciation Society*." An intake of breath and she was transported to the day when her son, now dead, was caught up in clouds.

The memory began with frantic knocking.

"Brian is hurt. He ran into a car," his friend shouted.

"Where is he?"

"Around the corner. His face is all bloody."

She hurtled out the front door.

Rounding the corner, she saw his bike against a car off to the side of the road. Her ten year old son was crumpled on the street, blood streaming from his head and face. She cradled him in her arms.

A man stood at the curb.

"What happened? Why did you hit him?" she shouted.

"He crashed into a parked car. I came along just as it happened."

An emergency vehicle careened around the corner. The medics were efficient. They staunched the blood flowing from a scalp wound, cleansed his face and applied a bandage to the oozing gash on his forehead. A cold pack placed on his lip completed their ministrations. No bones were broken. No irreparable damage was done. The reason for this collision? Brian said simply, "I was looking at the clouds."



Throughout his remaining 25 years that capacity to be so enthralled, so caught up, so intense in whatever he was doing or thinking, never left him. Some of his passions, of course, were fleeting – like playing football on the 7th grade team. Computers and electronic games on the other hand, ah, *these* were passions. At age 12, the youngest he was able to, he got a paper route to earn enough to buy a computer on which to play electronic games. At 15 ½ years old, the youngest he could, he got a job at Dairy Queen. He had a car to buy and, always, more games.

His dream was to fly. Big Bend Community College in Moses Lake, Washington, was the answer. There he earned his AA degree in aeronautics and small plane pilots' license. He loved to talk about the clouds he so frequently flew in. They fascinated him both scientifically and from a meteorological point of view. Clouds also fed into his passions for science-fiction and for fantasy.

He learned to be scrupulously exact in preparations for a flight. Other aspects of his life had gaps and tears.

Sadly, he couldn't continue flying after graduation. Prohibitive costs. Creatively, as was his nature, he found different ways to fly. In winter, he flung himself down the mountain on his snow board. In warm weather, he watched his golf ball fly 300 yards through the air. To the end, he had many unrealized soaring thoughts, plans and adventures.

At age 35, he appeared to his mother a well-grown man whose life was graced with a fiancée he loved and friends he cared for. She thought her worries about his lack of focus, his impulsivity, his rashness were over. Without warning he killed himself November 1, 2008.

The opening hymn, "*For the Beauty of the Earth*," abruptly brought her back to the present. It had been the opening hymn of his memorial service. Tears cascaded from her eyes. When would it not hurt? When would she not feel the stabbing pain?

In the two and a half years since his death, she had wept, railed, shouted and been silent in her grief. Nothing took the pain away. What helped was to talk about him. She did that – a lot with her husband who so loved him; a little with her daughter who had an ambivalent relationship with him; frequently with trusted friends who knew him as a child; a bit with friends who did not know him.

She did not feel guilty about his death. The guilt started when she went for a day, then two, without thinking about him. How could she forget? Those who knew about such things reminded her that she could not forget. After a time of insanity, she believed them.

The hymn finished. She dried her eyes, listened to the sermon about clouds and remembered.

~ ~ ~ *In loving memory of my son, Brian.* ~ ~ ~



The Compassionate Friends

Seattle-King County Chapter



The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is a *non-profit mutual assistance, self-help* organization offering *friendship, understanding, and hope* to bereaved parents and families. Anyone who has experienced the death of a child of any age, from any cause is welcome. Our meetings provide an opportunity to talk about their child and about their feelings as they go through the grieving process. There is no religious affiliation. There are no membership dues. The purpose of this support group is not to focus on the cause of death or the age of the child, but to support bereaved parents, grandparents and adult siblings in the positive resolution of the grief feelings and issues that revolve around the death of their loved one and support their efforts to achieve physical and emotional health.

TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Coming to the first meeting is the hardest, but you have nothing to lose and everything to gain! Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. At the next meeting you may find just the right person or just the right words that will help you in your grief work. Try to attend three times before deciding if TCF is right for you.

TO OUR MEMBERS WHO ARE FURTHER DOWN THE "GRIEF ROAD"

We need your encouragement and your support. Each meeting we have new parents. THINK BACK – what would it have been like for you at your first meeting if there had not been any TCF ‘veterans’ to welcome you, share your grief, encourage you and tell you, “your pain will not always be this bad, it really does get better!”

INFORMATION REGARDING OUR MEETINGS

PLEASE come to a meeting. We are here to discuss whatever is on your mind. This is YOUR group and we are here for each other. You do not have to talk at meetings. We welcome your participation in our group, but it is not a requirement. Coming to listen to the other members is okay, too. Our meetings are open to parents, grandparents, adult siblings, or adult family members such as aunts and uncles.

WE NEED YOUR HELP

This group belongs to you and cannot survive without assistance. Areas of help needed are refreshments, setting up before a meeting, being a phone friend for those who may be having a particularly difficult day, help with the newsletter, send thank-you notes, become a facilitator, volunteer to help with Chapter activities or serve on the steering committee.

Part of getting better, sometimes is being there to assist others, too, through this journey.

If you'd like to help, please contact us.

Chapter Co-Leaders: Mike McLeod: 206-369-7366 and Marge Tomlinson: tcfmarge@aol.com



KEEPING IN TOUCH



Seattle-King County Chapter **Phone: 206-241-1139** (TCF Line)

Seattle-King County Chapter **Mailing Address: P. O. Box 66896 Seattle, WA 98166-0896**

Seattle-King County Chapter **Website: www.tcfseattle.org**

Seattle-King County Chapter **Facebook: The Compassionate Friends, Seattle King County Chapter**

Phone Support: Having a rough moment? Need someone to talk to? Call Robyn at 360-259-8006 ♥

Western Washington Regional Coordinator: Jacqueline Russell 360-457-7395

TCF National Office Phone: 877-969-0010

TCF National Mailing Address: P. O. Box 3696 Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696

TCF National Website: www.compassionatefriends.org (website has link to Facebook)

♥ **TCF Online Support** - Please visit the National website to get the session schedule for the following groups:

♥ Parents / Grandparents

♥ Pregnancy / Infant Loss

♥ Survivors of Suicide

♥ Siblings

♥ No Surviving Children

♥ Men Only



SELF HELP

Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF, Katy, TX



For many of us, the monthly meeting of our Compassionate Friends Group is the only real healing time we give to ourselves. Helping ourselves on a daily basis is critical to our journey in the grieving process.

Many of us find solace in books. Others find it in movies, music, time with friends, meditation or intense spiritual conviction. Each day we should take some time to center ourselves, to find a place of peace.

If you haven't already done so, start with a quiet time of reflection and search your soul for the key to your own solace. There will still be bad, even terrible, days. The effort to help ourselves begins with knowing ourselves and finding the unique activity that soothes our broken hearts for just a little while.

In memory of my son, Todd Mennen



What About Vacations?

Elaine Stillwell



When your heart is hurting after the loss of a loved one, you wonder if you will ever be able to "take a vacation" from grief. There are many answers to this question. The secret is to find the right one for you.

Vacations for my family were spent mostly at home. Our work schedules rarely permitted us time to go away and with three children we found traveling to be expensive. I have always lived on Long Island (NY), and my parents brainwashed us to think that living on Long Island was a permanent vacation. Do you think they worked for the tourist board?

After my 19 year old daughter, Peggy, and my 21 year old son, Denis, died in the same automobile accident, I never planned a vacation to "get away" from my surroundings. My home was my "nest" and the source of great comfort to me. Not everybody feels this way. Staying with the familiar made me feel comfortable. Having my support circle nearby was important to me. Enjoying the pleasures that I had shared with Peggy and Denis kept them close to my heart. Even though tears could accompany these pleasures, the tears were healing. Whether it was simply walking along the beach where we had many family outings, or sitting by the pool where we had spent so many hours with swim team, or watching a soccer game which took so much of our time with three teams in the family, or noticing their favorite colors, flowers, TV programs, or foods. These things helped reinforce their presence forever in my mind, never to be erased.



Some families agonize whether to go away for a vacation after losing a loved one and some families can't get away fast enough! So you see how different we all are. It's tough for husbands and wives who disagree about vacation plans to find a reasonable "compromise" to give relief to their individual styles of grieving. The rule of thumb is: Do what helps you. If taking a cruise, or flying to a distant sunny haven, or visiting a mountain or seaside retreat, or just relaxing at a nearby resort helps you gain a moment of peace, do it. But one thing I must caution you about, don't go alone. There is time to reflect or quietly meditate wherever you are, but when you are hurting so terribly, it is not wise to be alone for long periods of time. However, it is good to have someone to share your thoughts with, releasing some of those feelings that are haunting you. Having a good listener with you is wonderful medicine for you. It's also good to have someone to hug. Remember, you need 4 hugs a day for survival, 8 hugs a day for maintenance, and 12 hugs a day for growth. Therefore, make sure you vacation with the right person!



Many grieving families that I have met have found solace in a trip "away" from their home base. Sometimes, just the change is what they need. Other times, it's leaving work or that "empty chair" behind. A little sunshine can warm our souls, so the warmer climates appeal to us and seem to bring an inner cheer. I know I am a "sunshine" person and can accomplish ten times as much on a sunny day, so I'm sure a sunny vacation would be productive for me.

In my early days of bereavement, I found that taking a little photo album like a "grandma's brag book" with me, filled with my favorite pictures of my Peggy and Denis, made it feel as if they were with me. Packing that album in every pocketbook I used, whether the large everyday variety or the tiny evening bag, it was like a pacifier to me. When a friend of mine told me that she dreaded going on vacation "without her daughter along," I suggested she take a little picture album, crammed full of her daughter's snapshots, with her on the trip and she did. When she returned, she called me and happily announced that it had made a difference to her, releasing some of that emptiness she had felt. So take a chance and try something different to help your heart. You might surprise yourself!

Other bereaved friends could not bear to stay home for major holidays and off they flew to far-away vacation spots. That worked for them, getting away from the hoopla of the holidays and the family gatherings that they did not feel strong enough yet to attend. Some of these bereaved families said they found a respite from their grief while "on vacation" but that coming home was the hardest, causing feelings of depression when they returned. So, we all have to find the balance that fits our lives.



It doesn't happen overnight. It's something that requires "trial and error" by us to find the blend that lifts our spirits. Vacations can be a time of "renewal" for us. We all know that we need a vacation "from grief." We just have to figure out what kind of vacation our own heart needs. Good luck!

GRIEVING IN PAIRS

Gerry Hunt, TCF, White River Junction, VT

How many times have people said, "Well, thank God you have each other." How many times have you felt "each other" to be entirely inadequate at meeting your needs?

Alarming statistics are available telling us of the rocky road parents encounter in their marriage after the death of a child. We sometimes see in ourselves a touchiness or quickness to become irritated that wasn't there before. It always seems that my "bad" day is my wife's "good" day, or the day she wakes up crying was the day I had planned on playing tennis.

Or sometimes, even more difficult, we both have a bad day and find no help from the other in pulling things back together. How can one person hold up another when he is himself face down in the mud?

Every person grieves differently. This is a rule that even applies within a family. And the needs of every individual are different. While you may need to talk and talk and talk, your spouse may need some time alone to reflect inwardly.

You have both been through the worst experience of your life. And while at times you can face recovery as a team, sometimes you must develop the patience to be able to wait out certain needs alone or with someone else. Realize that no matter how it is shown, your partner hurts, too.



On Pain and Healing...

In pain management used for patients with chronic pain, it is taught not to tighten around the pain but to relax and allow the pain to be present. The idea is that when pain is resisted, it intensifies. When we breath deeply and acknowledge the presence of pain, it has room to move and can dissipate more readily. Pain is there to tell us something, to warn us of possible danger.

This is as true for emotional, spiritual and mental pain as it is for physical pain. When pain speaks, we need to listen. All it takes is paying attention to our pain so that when it comes we remember to breathe and get soft. We don't want to fight with our pain. We want to learn from it.

Time does not heal. But healing does take time. Give yourself the gift of time. To become whole means that as we open to the pain, we open to the loss. We break open and, as a consequence, we get bigger and include more of life. We include what would have been "lost" to us if our hearts and minds had closed against the pain, we include what would have been lost if we had not taken the time to heal. As singer/songwriter Carly Simon tells us: "There's more room in a broken heart."

From the chapter, "Time Does Not Heal All Wounds," of the book, "Good Grief," by Deborah Morris Coryel

Death of a Sibling: Issues for the Grieving Child

By Robin Fiorelli

When a sibling dies, the surviving child reacts both to the loss of his or her sibling and to the change in behavior and grief process of his or her parents. A sibling's grief response may be longer or shorter than the parents', and the sibling may have a different understanding of the death. Siblings often are asked numerous questions about their brother or sister's death by their peers and other adults. This can feel overwhelming to a child.

An ill child often receives more attention from parents than a well sibling. The surviving child often believes he or she will get more attention from the parents after the death of the sibling, and then he or she is disappointed when those

expectations are not met. The surviving child also may grapple with identity and role issues after the loss. "Am I still a little brother?" "Who's going to take out the garbage now?"

Grieving parents sometimes are overprotective of the remaining siblings, concerned that they may die or become ill as well. Other parents place expectations or unreasonable demands on the remaining siblings to take on the responsibilities and roles or to have the attributes of the deceased sibling.

It is important that parents avoid being either overprotective or over permissive with a grieving sibling—despite the temptation. Care should be taken not to make comparisons between the deceased child and the siblings, as it may lead to the surviving children feeling inadequate. Care also should be taken not to assign inappropriate responsibilities to a child that the deceased sibling used to have—especially responsibilities that are not developmentally appropriate.

For all these reasons, grieving siblings need a lot of reassurance from their parents that they are loved for who they are and that they will be cared for and supported. They need to be reminded that they did not cause their brother's or sister's death. They also should be encouraged to share memories and hold keepsakes of their deceased sibling and to participate in family rituals related to the deceased child.

THE GIFT OF SOMEONE WHO LISTENS

Those of us who have travelled a while
Along this path called grief
Need to stop and remember that mile,
That first mile of no relief.
It wasn't the person with answers
Who told us of ways to deal.
It wasn't the one who talked and talked
That helped us start to heal.
Think of the friends who quietly sat
And held our hands in theirs.
The ones who let us talk and talk
And hugged away our tears.
We need to always remember
That more than the words we speak,
It's the gift of someone who listens
That most of us desperately seek.

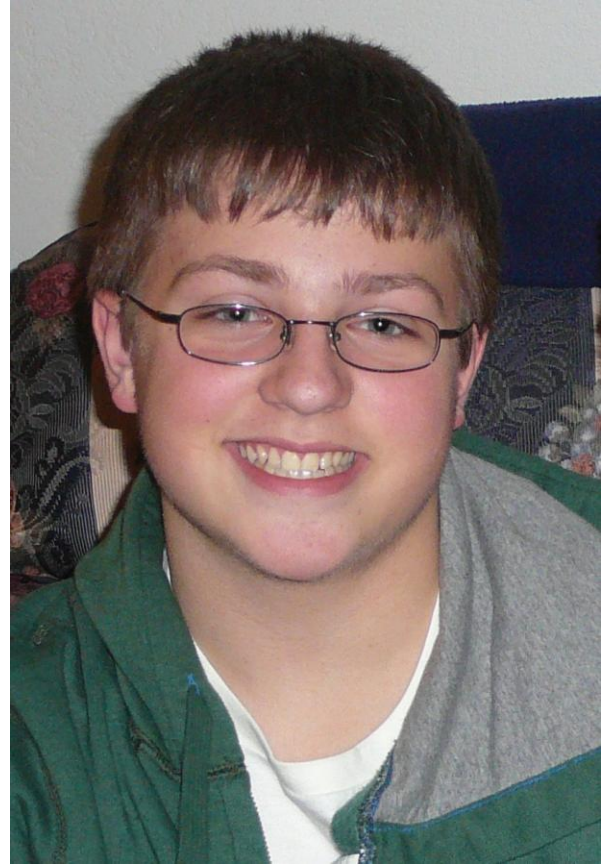


Nancy Myerholtz, TCF Waterville/Toledo, OH

Garret's Story

Garret Lee Hodges was a loving, funny and smart 15 year old boy. He was our first born child, a big brother, a grandson, a nephew, a cousin and friend to many. Garret loved life, family and friends. He also loved his hobbies with a passion; dirt bike riding, Xbox, air soft and texting friends.

Dates and times are not clear in my memory as we were in such a fog for so long. That first morning Garret called me to let me know he didn't feel good; he had a headache and wanted to stay home. He stayed home that day, played Xbox, texted friends, and rested. The next day he was feeling worse, he was running a fever of 103 degrees and started vomiting. Nursing advice was to treat him for the flu. The third day, he continued to be tired, feverish and still slightly vomiting. Same nursing advice, it was flu season after all. We went to the doctor that morning. They were quite concerned thinking he was dehydrated so they started giving him IV fluids which (unknowingly) caused his damaged heart to work too hard. He went from the Dr.'s office to the hospital in the slowest ambulance ride ever. They took him right in and I remember the attending doctor saying "we have a really sick kid here". They were going to get him stabilized and take him to ICU. The ER doctors still did not know what was taking our son. Garret's heart stopped on the elevator. It was a couple of months before we received the diagnosis of Viral Myocarditis; it was determined with a heart biopsy.



It is so important to our family that others do not have to suffer as we have. Awareness and education are key! The loss of our son has made us so aware that nothing is in our control. Garret walked into the doctor's office that day and did not come home.



We all have lost a true treasure, our son Garret.



**Myocarditis
Foundation**

Knowledge Nurtures Hope

~ Trish and Tony Hodges attend the Seattle-King County, WA Chapter of The Compassionate Friends. ~
Garret's story is being published on MF posters around the country to help raise awareness of myocarditis.



HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

Joan Schmidt, TCF, New Jersey



As long as it takes; that's how long it takes.

It's not about forgetting. It's about hurting.

And I know that if I am alive twenty years from now, and I happen to look at a blue sky with puffy clouds and think of my son Fred, and figure how old he'd be, and what he'd be doing, and what his children would be doing – I'll hurt.

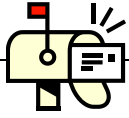
And I know that if I can switch my train of thought from what is not, to what was, a happy memory, I'll be able to smile through the tears.

We don't stop hurting, ever. But so many things occur each day, so many events and thoughts and happenings intervene, that our focus is shifted. The death of our child changes from the main concern in our life to one of many.

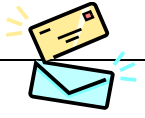
A life may stop, but the loving goes on. To love deeply is to be vulnerable. For all our days.

♥ TCF asks for donations in memory of our children who have died. ♥

Our chapter is funded solely through donations; therefore we sincerely appreciate your support.



♥ Please help us help others by making a LOVE GIFT today. ♥
All donations are tax deductible. You and your child's name will be noted in the next newsletter



Love Gift Form

Love gifts are **tax-deductible donations** made to the Seattle-King County Chapter of TCF in memory of your beloved child, sibling, grandchild or loved one.

Send checks and forms to: Seattle- King County TCF
Love Gifts
P.O. Box 66896
Seattle, WA 98166-0896

Your name: _____

Address: _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (if we have any questions): _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

In memory of (name of child): _____

Date of Birth: _____

Date of Death: _____

Special Message: _____

Send checks and forms to: Seattle - King County TCF
Love Gifts
P.O. Box 66896
Seattle, WA 98166-0896



With Love, We Remember Them...



**In Memory of ...
CHRISTOPHER WEST**

"I love you and miss you every minute of every day my angel. Love Mom"
From Debbie West



**In Memory of ...
NOAH and PEYTON JERVIS**

From Linda Jervis



**In Memory of ...
SHANE ROLLER**

"I love you best - I said it first.
Love, Mom"
From Jackie Schwendeman



**In Memory of ...
LOUIS ANTHONY FIORE, IV**

"Rocky, Mom, Lori & Jason and family miss & love you. Love, Aunt Jackie."
From Jackie Schwendeman



**In Memory of ...
JOHN BRIAN PIETZ**

February 1968 - February 2002
"I love ya'. Mom"
From Barbara Jean Pietz

In Memory of ...

AMBER WILLIAMS
From Kevin Williams and family



**In Memory of ...
BRIANA RAE GRIFFIN**

February 1968 - March 2004
"Forever in our hearts. We love you!"
From Marlyn and Kristi Langdahl



**In Memory of ...
MANDY ROHWEDDER**

From Robyn and Steve Rohwedder



**In Memory of ...
YOUR LOVED ONE**

From Paul and Kelly Wilson



**In Memory of ...
MATT NICKELL**

July 1958 - August 1987
and

MONTEY NICKELL
March 1960 - January 2004
"Oh, how I have memories."
From Judith Hitchcock

**In Memory of ...
LENA, my daughter**

February 1964 - September 2008
"I'll love you 'as high as the sky' - until I see you again, honey. Love, Mom"
From Linnea and Ken Christopherson



**In Memory of ...
WADE KING**

June 1989 - June 1999
"In memory of Wade."
From Frank and Mary King and family



**In Memory of ...
LAURA and ANDREA MAMMOSER**

"We still remember."
From Anita Mammoser



**In Memory of ...
KEVIN STONER**

May 1977 - December 2008
From Ken and Jennifer Stoner



♥ *Thank you to all who make donations to Seattle-King County TCF through United Way and for their workplace Matching Gift programs!*

The Compassionate Friends
Seattle-King County Chapter
P.O. Box 66896
Seattle, WA 98166-0896



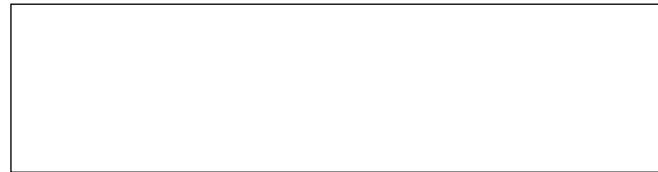
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. Postage Paid
Seattle, WA
Permit #1037



July & August 2011

Newsletter supported by:
BRIM PRESS
206-433-8811



Eastside TCF "Walk to Remember"
Sunday, July 10th, 2011
10:00 AM ~ 1:00 PM
Marymoor Park in Redmond



The Eastside TCF "Walk to Remember" is a two-mile walk open to everyone who wants to join "Hands and Hearts" in remembering our children who have died too soon. It will be a reflective, peaceful walk followed by a short remembrance ceremony, a live butterfly release and lunch.

Invite your family and friends to join in this event.

Pre-registration is strongly recommended.
You may register on-site the day of the Walk,
but the number of shirts, hoodies and lunches available for sale will be limited.

For information & registration packet contact:
Juli Lund - 425-765-1382
or julilund@comcast.net

Sponsored by Eastside TCF
<http://www.eastsidetcf.org>
(425) 746-7465

TCF National Conference
July 15-17, 2011
Minneapolis/St. Paul Minnesota



34th National Conference
Minneapolis / St. Paul, MN
July 15-17, 2011



THE COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS
SUPPORTING EVERY OTHER CHILD

Even if you aren't planning to attend the conference in Minneapolis, there are several other ways to participate. You can submit the name of your child to be carried by volunteers in the Walk to Remember that takes place on Sunday, July 17th. Or you can order a Star of Hope picture centered around the child you're remembering. Or you can create a memorial website to raise donations for the TCF National Conference Walk to Remember Friends Asking Friends program.

For information:

Call the TCF National Office 877-969-0010 or visit:
<http://www.compassionatefriends.org>