

**Our Mission & Purpose** *is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age by any cause and to provide information to help others be supportive.*

## Huntsville Area Chapter – Update

The joint TCF and Hospice Family Care “2009 World Wide Candle Lighting” service was held on Sunday, December 13, at the Mayfair Church of Christ. We remembered our children and siblings with a moving and special program and shared a time of food and fellowship afterwards. This annual program is especially touching and always well attended.

As our TCF Chapter continues to grow, changes to the Steering Committee have been made to better serve the community and to assure that needs are being met. Please don't hesitate to call the contacts listed if you have any questions or know of someone who might benefit from knowing about TCF and the comfort that being with others who truly “understand” what they are going through brings.

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**Our Vision** *is that everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.*

**Our Meetings:** Monthly, every third Sunday, 2-4 pm  
Renasant Bank, Balmoral Drive, Huntsville, AL  
Information 256-883-0997

## Personal Contacts

*We have all experienced the pain of losing a child. We understand and would like to hear from you. If you can't reach a particular person, please call another and make contact.*

### We Need Not Walk Alone

Illness..... Gaylene  
(256) 325-8296 [illness@tcfhuntsville.org](mailto:illness@tcfhuntsville.org)

Accident ..... Pam  
(256) 534-1873 [accident@tcfhuntsville.org](mailto:accident@tcfhuntsville.org)

Substance Abuse..... Jane & Herb  
(256) 883-0997 [substance\\_abuse@tcfhuntsville.org](mailto:substance_abuse@tcfhuntsville.org)

Suicide ..... Ray  
(256) 650-0381 [suicide@tcfhuntsville.org](mailto:suicide@tcfhuntsville.org)

Website..... <http://www.tcfhuntsville.org>

Email ..... [tcf@tcfhuntsville.org](mailto:tcf@tcfhuntsville.org)

### Additional Resources:

Hospice Family Care HOPE..... Huntsville  
(256) 650-1212

TCF National Office ... (877) 969-0010  
<http://www.compassionatefriends.org/>



Photo by J. Frasse FreeDigitalPhotos.net

Don't forget to mark your calendar for the upcoming 33<sup>rd</sup> TCF National Conference (Reflections of Love, Visions of Hope) to be held in Arlington, VA, July 2-4, 2010. For further information and registration information go to the following link:

[http://www.compassionatefriends.org/News\\_Events/TCF\\_National\\_Conferences.aspx](http://www.compassionatefriends.org/News_Events/TCF_National_Conferences.aspx)

Bereaved parent, Mitch Carmody, an author, artist and frequent presenter at TCF National Conferences, has created a series of drawings entitled "Faces of Grief". He has granted permission to include this work periodically in our newsletter.

## FACES OF GRIEF

### SHOCK



Shock is a twofold emotion.

First it can be that scream of terror that vibrates from your bones when you know or hear that your loved one has died. IT ROCKS YOUR WORLD!!! You scream NO!!! to anyone and to everyone "no this cannot be happening."

Secondly shock is the ongoing numbness that gives us the ability to even function. Shock is a fundamental survival tool of the human psyche that will last as long as it is needed to get done what is necessary for one's survival.

Although most of the bereaved experience shock when they face the reality that their loved has died, some dependant on circumstances, as in some long term illness will not. Survivors may at first feel a sense of relief, followed by guilt for feeling that relief, but not experience shock per se. They may feel the numbness component of shock that their loved one really has died, but not the surreal surprise that accompanies sudden death.

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## Poetry and Prose

### Touch Me

How hollow, now, my aching soul  
In the days that you've been gone,  
As hot tears stream from burning eyes  
And the pain goes on and on.

I call out to you in the darkness  
Still hoping that you will hear,  
For the emptiness I'm feeling  
Is a weighty load to bear.

Come to me in my dreams tonight,  
That I may know you're near.  
Your ghostly presence in my sight  
Would give me naught to fear.

For a mother's love, in death, as life,  
In purest form is given,  
And to touch you once again, my child  
Seems the richest gift from Heaven.

I would not ask a wondrous glow,  
Or music, sweet and clear;  
A simple touch would be enough  
To wipe away my tears.

And the song within my joyful heart  
Would fill the still night air,  
For I had longed to see you,  
And you'd come and found me here.

Diane Robertson, TCF Foxboro, MA



## **...From the Heart**

*...a compassionate friend speaks*

*"...From the Heart", is a regular feature that will give a local member the opportunity to share a tip, suggestion, or experience of what has helped or hurt in his personal grief journey. As always, remember that we all grieve differently and it's OK to accept what makes sense and reject the rest.*

### **The Compassionate Friends National Conference - Then, Now, Next**

Leaving for the airport our nerves were on edge. Sixteen months after our youngest son Ben died, we were still broken and little in the world made sense to us. Family, friends, and coworkers tried to understand what we were feeling and going through but fell short. Thankfully, a bereaved coworker told us about The Compassionate Friends and what they had to offer, a web site, brochures, books, meetings and most interesting of all an annual national conference attended by hundreds of people just like us; our decision was easy. We were on our way to the TCF National Conference.

On arrival at the airport our luggage managed to go to some other city so we checked in at the conference sans suitcase. Conference rules mandated wearing name tags everywhere; my first thought was "Great!" more silly rules. But as we wandered around looking lost, a stranger named Rob approached us, looked directly at our name tags and said in a sincere voice, "Tell me about Ben".

There was an instant connection with Rob and our nervousness melted away; someone seemed to care. When we told him about our lost luggage he invited us to his workshop the following day and said "just sit in the back of the room". With that comment, we laughed for the first time in a long time. The atmosphere at the conference was safe, comfortable, peaceful, and full of love. Unfortunately this feeling had to end and home beckoned. That was 2005 in Boston.

Since then, my wife Jane and I have dedicated part of every summer to remembering Ben at the annual conference. We headed for the airport again this time to attend the TCF 2009 National Conference in Portland, OR. Our nerves were on edge again; both of us understood perfectly what was going to happen, how it was going to happen but this

time we wanted to be the ones reaching out to others who were like us 5 years ago.

Behind the registration desk, I could easily tell who was at their first conference because I patented the lost look. It only took a few extra seconds to talk with them and the pressure seemed to lift right off their shoulders. It always amazes me that the majority of attendees are in their first or second year of bereavement. There are hundreds of people who don't know today they will be one of us next year and will be at the 2010 conference in Washington D.C.

For me the conference starts on Thursday evening after I pin Ben's picture to the memory board. By conference end, 10 to 12 double sided boards are covered with pictures. Each one tells a different story and the pain felt for each parent can be overwhelming. Later that evening about a dozen sharing sessions are offered that focus on different topics of grief. Stories, memories, and pain are shared by all. As first time facilitators, we watched those who were not speaking and could see the nods of their heads and sometimes the flowing tears agreeing with what they were hearing from strangers. Everyone listened as they waited for their turn to share.

Every year I anxiously await the announcement of the key note speakers. I've listened to so many good speeches; they're all the same but all different. Pastors, counselors, politicians, authors, victims of crimes, and TCF first families, each is a bereaved parent who shares their story and leaves us with profound thoughts and ideas. Other than being public figures, they are just like us, broken by grief while speaking from the heart.

At the opening session this year, Michele Long Eder spoke about her son Ben's death in a commercial fishing accident off the coast of Oregon in 2001. Nearly every other sentence I heard her say, "Ben". My attention never wavered. It took on a rhythm to me and the more she said "Ben" the more I remembered my Ben. Even after 5 years it still hurt and I had to keep drying my eyes.

Music and entertainment play a key role at each conference. The musicians have all experienced grief and most are bereaved parents. Judy Philbin, a bereaved mother touched me deeply with her music during the candle light service.

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Usually we return home with at least one or two CDs available in the bookstore from one of the entertainers and this year was no exception. The Butterfly Boutique and The Bookstore offer so much that like kids in a candy shop we couldn't get enough. Sometimes I wish I had a spare suitcase for the trip home.

The mainstay in every conference is the workshops. Topics range from causes of death, length of grief, ways to deal with grief, and dozens more. The hardest part is picking only 7 out of 100 offered. I attended a session about signs from our children; Mitch Carmody spoke to a standing room only crowd as he told us with story and pictures some of the events that have happened since his son's death.

My personal favorite event is the candle lighting that follows the banquet. This year in Portland and last year in Nashville overflow rooms had to be set up to accommodate everyone. As the lights are lowered, and the candles are lit one by one, and the music plays in the background, the emotions run free. This is my time with Ben. As I looked around, I could see almost every eye staring at the flame on their candle; the memories of each child were almost visible and literally filled the room. At our table was a family of 4 from Texas who was only 5 months bereaved. I could see myself in them years ago as the tears came without hesitation.

Sunday changes pace with the annual Walk to Remember. Almost 1,000 people with the same T-shirt and the names of their child pinned to their shirt, go for an organized 2 mile walk in memory of their children. It is a sight to see so many people walking. Yearly, I carry the names of children from my chapter as well as Ben's name while other volunteers walk with names of children from families who cannot attend; thousands of names are carried each year.

Each conference comes to an end too quickly but another one is always in planning. Unlike my first conference, I now appreciate the name tag. Once you learn to read it, you can tell who is a first time attendee (butterfly sticker), who is in early grief (heart sticker), where someone lives, their name, and most importantly their child's name. Most folks like hugs, but everyone wants to hear their child's name spoken. Whenever I see a butterfly and heart on the same name tag, I react like Rob did with us a long time ago in Boston. I ask about the child by name and ask if I

could give them a hug. I have never been turned down. I'm confident that next year in D.C., the new attendees will be glad to hear their child's name and get a hug from a stranger, I'll be there; they won't be alone.

**Ben's Dad – Herb**

*Chapter Leader - TCF Huntsville Area*

## **A SIBLING'S PERSPECTIVE**

### **As Siblings go...**

...Don was the youngest son (one younger sister). As such he took a lot of stuff from his older siblings, especially the next three older brothers. Did I say that were ten of us (6 boys and 4 girls). So, there was a lot of 'stuff' dished out as you can imagine. None of it was cruel (although some may say different). Most was just 'teasing'.

As I remember Don, I always think of most of things we said and did to him. I'll try to recall some of these in no particular order. AND please know this, as I recount these tales, I do it with my continued love and respect for my dear brother. It's just that these memories tend to bring all the joy of that love back to me. It helps me remember him best. I could write about his accolades, but I'll leave those to another time and maybe another sibling.

Some of you may recall that I penned an article about our brother Bill for one of our early newsletters. That article was later published in the National TCF magazine, "We Need Not Walk Alone". I said at the time, in closing the article, "Book to follow." Well, this may be yet another chapter to add to the book if and when it's written.

Enough about that... on with the stories...

When Don was little, he had a strange way of interpreting the English language. We knew what he was trying to say, but later in life we used some of these expressions to 'remember'

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with him and each of those things that made him Don to all of us.

One was when Bill was a newspaper carrier, he won a membership to the local YMCA. As such, he was involved in many extra-curricular activities with the "Y". Whenever he 'went to the Y', Don would say, "Bay loo loo Y" (translation = Bill went to the Y). How could we not bring up such things at family gatherings?

Another such 'interpretation' was during warm summer nights at our Midwest home. We had a practice of taking a quart jar and poking holes in the lid, then capture as many 'lightning bugs' (fireflies to many of you). We were very zealous about our conquests. Don was no exception. However, his account of the activity was that we went out to "sheck a lightning bug"... sheck the operative word meaning 'catch'. Over the years we couldn't help but remind him of these pronouncements of his.

Now I'm sure that Jim and Dean will have additional recollections and/or different ones, but these are the ones we definitely share in our memories.

When Don graduated from High School, he came down from K.C. to Wichita to stay with me and attend college. He'd begun to fancy himself as a golfer. On one occasion he and I and a friend of mine, Alex, a Brit (remember that part), went out to a part to 'practice' driving and chipping. One particularly long drive of Don's, he couldn't locate his ball. As we walked around looking for it, Alex was the first to discover its location. He then declared its location to Don. Well, a conversation ensued that I can only remember the final two exchanges... When Alex explained that he'd been telling Don for some time where the ball was, Don said, "If you could only speak English..." Well, Alex, the Brit that he was, was not to be accosted with that and retorted to Don, "On the contrary, if you could just understand English". That incident was stored away in my memory bank labeled "Don". [It should be noted that Don went on to be a golfer and shared the golfing experiences with Jim and Dean, the two other brothers who were between him and me in age].

During that same time frame, Don decided he wanted to learn guitar. He encouraged me to join him. So, we both ordered guitars from Sears. They cost us \$19.95 each and they came with a book which had a 'tear out' acetate 'record'. As we began our learning experience, we'd put the record on the turntable and listen intently to the instructions which were rather parochial. One such instruction was the forming and playing of the F-Cord. After the lengthy explanation, the audio teacher said, "It may sound rough at first". Now that was a severe understatement. Both Don and I used that phrase as we progressed through our learning experience. In fact, we used it many times over throughout the years. I'm so glad we shared that experience... I can't today play an F-Cord without thinking about Don... truth! And as I've encountered new pickin' buddies through the years in my travels across the US, I've shared this story. Folks who've never met Don get to share at least one of the memories that are "Don" with me.

Now I know I've rambled on and the roadmap of this article is a bit convoluted, but it makes it best to me. As I remember Don whether alone or with other friends and family, these are the things that are retrieved from my mental "Don" folder... the things that keep his memory very much alive and present with me. I love you little Bro' and miss you a lot. Maybe we can 'sheck' a few lightning bugs when we get together some day.

Again, Love you Bro'  
Bro' Ray

**Cory's Dad – Ray**

*Chapter Co-Leader - TCF Huntsville Area*



Photo by C. Meyin FreeDigitalPhotos. net

Note: Our Huntsville newsletters are available online at <http://www.tcfhuntsville.org/Newsletters.html>

## We Remember Them

*...on their Birth Dates, on their Death Dates, and always...*

January	
Peter T.	Duke
Paul J.	McKinney
Zachary	Guidry

February	
Rebecca L.	Craig
Ricky	Rousseau

March	
Brian	Dunham
Benjamin S.	Larnerd
Daniel J.	Rhoades
Evan G	Riddle
Chris	Richardson
Ricky	Rousseau



**2009 Candle Light Service – Huntsville, AL**

A new year brings time to  
reflect  
on the children we love,  
those who remain with us  
and those for whom we  
grieve ~  
Wayne Loder

[Editor's Note: The above quote was  
taken from the TCF e-Newsletter from  
December 2008]

### Gifts of Love and Remembrance

*The following donations will help The Compassionate Friends to be here for the families who do not know today that they will need us tomorrow.*

<p><b>In loving memory of April Warren Page</b> Murray &amp; Iris - Parents</p>	<p><b>In loving memory of Paul &amp; Jason McKinney</b> Tom &amp; Sandra - Parents</p>	<p><b>In loving memory of Bryan Eidsaunne</b> Roger &amp; Gaylene – Parents</p>
<p><b>In loving memory of Ben Larnerd</b> Herb &amp; Jane – Parents Nancy &amp; Robert - Grandparents</p>	<p><b>In loving memory of Emily D. Clark</b> Joe &amp; Leeta - Parents</p>	<p><b>In loving memory of Cory Woodson</b> Nancy &amp; Robert – Grandparents</p>
	<p><b>In loving memory of Bridgett Meenan</b> Debbie</p>	

Donations and Remembrance Gifts are tax deductible and may be sent to:  
TCF Huntsville Area – See the last page for mailing address

## Calendar of Events

**2010**

<b>January</b>	January 17 – TCF Video on the Basics of the Organization
<b>February</b>	February 21 – “Ask It Basket”
<b>March</b>	March 21 – “How Are You” and other clichés of grief.
<b>April</b>	April 18 – “Our Story” - Small Groups

TCF Huntsville meetings are held at 2:00PM on the third Sunday of each month at:  
Renasant Bank (Community Room)  
4245 Balmoral Dr (off Airport Rd)  
Huntsville, AL 35801

### Official TCF Huntsville Mailing Address

TCF Huntsville Area  
C/O H. Larnerd  
7801 Chadwell Dr. SW  
Huntsville, AL 35802

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Mailing Address  
Street Number and Name  
City, State 98765-4321

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Wisdom, compassion, and courage are the three universally recognized moral qualities of men - **Confucius**

There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are messengers of overwhelming grief...and unspeakable love - **Washington Irving**

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This Newsletter is published by the Huntsville Area Chapter of The Compassionate Friends. Your comments and suggestions are welcome and may be sent to [newsletter@tcfhuntsville.org](mailto:newsletter@tcfhuntsville.org).