



sudS Spirit

Quarterly Newsletter

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

Sandra A. Ravel
Joe Saner

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Welcome *from the Editor*

Fall is one of my favorite seasons. I met my wife in the Fall on a college campus and spent the Winter season getting to know her making Winter a favorite season for both of us throughout our time together. Fall is a time of reflection for me. Reflection sometimes takes us back to the beginning of things so...

I was going through the **sudSSpirit** archives and came across our first issue of this newsletter. It made its debut in the Fall season during October, 2008. It was our inaugural edition and was published six months after the first meeting of **sudSSpirit**. Back then, it was not saved electronically, not knowing what the future held for it or our group. I have scanned the hard copy and will distribute to those that attend our two support groups for a bit of nostalgia. It will be apparent that we've come a long way in appearance and content over these past eleven years. Copies of this "collector item" will be available to anyone should they desire to have it. Just ask.

sudSSpirit was founded in 2008 to help provide a place of comfort, compassion, and hope for those that have experienced a sudden unexpected death of their spouse or significant other. Meetings are held monthly in Reading, PA and Bennington, VT. All meetings are Free and No registration is required. Additional information is within this newsletter. **sudSSpirit** stands for "Sudden Unexpected Death of a Spouse – Survivors in Participation to Inform, Renew, Improve, and Triumph"

If this is the first time you have heard about us and are in need of some help through our support group chapters, please see page three in the right margin for additional information about our chapters. We also have a list of other resources on page two in the left margin that may be helpful to you. This newsletter is available to anyone anywhere regardless of their specific loss so if you know of someone that can benefit from these pages, please share this with them and have them contact us with their email or address information and we will make sure that they become part of our mailing list for future publications. You may also contact

the editor/founder directly at **717-866-2401** or sudsspirit@gmail.com. We also have a facebook page should you want to check that out.

Thank you to those that have been long time supporters of our group and thanks to all of those that we have helped along the way for believing in yourself and us to help you in your time of need. *Together We Can Help Each Other Heal.*

Memories of Summer

by John Kreiser

The sky is ablaze with the summer sun
The farmers in fields, their work never done
The children at pools for swimming and fun
Ducks on the pond and rabbits on the run
A hot air balloon drifts lazily past
The kids in the yard play tag, running fast
Cows in the pasture recline on the grass
Fisherman vie for the elusive bass
Mothers outside to hang out the laundry
Brown-freckled boys try climbing the tall tree
Skydivers learning to jump and fall free
Long afternoons that feel moist and sultry
Pigtails and bows in the little girls' hair
Soft drinks and ice cream are typical fare
Bicyclists speeding down hills part the air
Fathers asleep in their favorite chair
Memories of summer are often unique
Fireflies lighting their way to roof peak
Crickets in chorus, frogs trying to speak
Winter, by contrast, appears very bleak

Reprinted with permission from the author

An Entry From My Journal

"I miss my old life. It left the day she died. The world I knew stopped that day; never to spin the same speed again. Nothing stays the same-ever. Life's outlook and your future within it are redefined by how you accept it and deal with it all."

-Editor



Dominic Murgido - Editor

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- Editor

"If there ever is a tomorrow when we are not together there is something you must always remember; you are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think. But the most important thing is keep me in your heart. I'll stay there forever."

-AA Milne, Author/Creator
Winnie-the-Pooh

Resources

- Editor

GRMHA (Greater Reading
Mental Health Alliance)
www.grmha.org
610-775-3000

St Joseph's Spiritual Care
www.thefutureofhealthcare.org
610-378-2297

Compassionate Care Hospice
1-800-777-5109

Family Guidance Center
www.familyguidancecenter.com
610-374-4963

Heartland Home Health Care
and Hospice
610-373-6898 or 888-800-0224

Circle of Life Coalition
www.circleoflifecoalition.org
www.griefshare.org

Diakon Family Life Services
www.diakon.org/fls/NPLoss.asp
610-682-1337

Bennington Area VNA & Hospice
www.bavnah.org
802-442-5502

Bayada Hospice Services
www.bayada.com
855-696-2072
610-367-1608

Pathways Center for Grief & Loss
www.pathwaysthroughgrief.org
800-924-7610

Spiritrust Lutheran Home Care &
Hospice
800-840-9081



Sunday Morning Walk

by Dominic Murgido

On a recent morning after attending a local postcard & ephemera show, I decided to take a walk on a local trail. The trail I speak of is the Grings Mill trail that meanders along the Tulpehocken Creek and remains of the old union canal in the Reading, PA area.

It was good to be back there again recalling the last time I was there alone was about nine years ago; with my wife Sue more like fifteen. It was a favorite trail of ours that we often walked, rode bikes, took our daughter there with her bike; a family experience in many ways over the years.

As I ventured on this sunny morning I said hello to many along the way. Couples, singles, families that were enjoying the day as much as I was with walking, jogging and riding bikes. Sometimes walking helps us clear our heads and provides a much needed relaxation time spent with our own silence. The walk becomes effortless and not even tiring as we sort through our inner most thoughts about life around us. I felt myself smiling as I recalled fond memories of walks from the past. Happy moments of time spent with my family along this trail not knowing that there would be a day (this day) when I would be doing this very thing now.

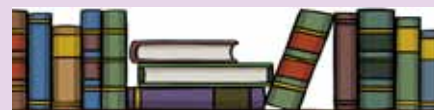
I am grateful for the past that allowed me to share my life with someone I loved and to have been part of the experience of raising a daughter that my wife and I are so proud of. I know Sue knows that Amanda is doing fine as a Mother of two and wife of someone she loves. I know Sue knows about her grandchildren and how precious they are to the family.

Being outdoors on a beautiful day can be inspiring. Adding to that a walk along a familiar trail that brings back warm memories can be satisfying. There are places along that trail that made me stop and reflect about things we spoke about, planned, and even took a break on one of the benches along the way. Sometimes the walks along the trail took us to events that were scheduled along the trail for all of us to enjoy and become a part of the experience. As time passed and we all grew older, our conversations changed and eventually our walks were the two of us since our daughter became of age where she would rather be with her friends.

I have been doing a lot of walking lately to stay healthy and like most of us trying to lose a pound or two. Most of my walks are in and around my neighborhood and occasionally along a bike path or trail. Walking is peaceful. Walking, when you do it daily, seems like it takes no time to complete. Before you know it, you just walked

briskly for thirty minutes and you're back where you began. It's like a meditation;

a time of reflection; an opportunity to cleanse your mind of thoughts and worries and be in the moment. I do miss walking with Sue but there are times I feel I'm not alone because I sense her presence around me and am comforted to know she will always be in my heart and soul.



Book Review - Editor

Grief Day By Day: Simple Practices and Daily Guidance for Living with Loss

by Jan Warner

Jan Warner has created a wonderful book full of emotions. Not only has she gathered remarkable and helpful wisdom from philosophy, psychology and even poetry to allow some insight in the complicated journey of grieving, she also talks openly about her own journey and experience of loss and grieving.

"Grief visits us all. How we respond to it can determine whether it stops us from living or deepens our humanness." *Grief Day by Day* is a book to anyone who finds themselves knee deep in one of the harsh realities of life.

Inside the pages of *Grief Day by Day* you'll find:

- **365 Daily Reflections** that include quotes, meditations, and other musings on grief
- **Weekly Themes** that capture common feelings and experiences such as: Loneliness, Things Left Unsaid, Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms, Guilt, and Intimacy
- **52 Healing Exercises** that help you process your feelings at the end of each week and develop skills for coping with grief as it arises

The author helps us come to accept that we don't ever fully "get over" the loss of a loved one, guiding fellow survivors of grief on how to continue living with the ever-present reality of our loss.

The information this book provides is useful and valuable to every griever, regardless of their status.



What? Another Anniversary *by Ellen Perry Berkeley*

I was hugely aware of the event long before it happened – it was the 10-year anniversary of my beloved husband's death. Anniversaries are to be celebrated, of course, but what would I "celebrate" about losing this wonderful man?

My sadness was overwhelming – almost the bereavement I felt when he died. His smile, especially his smile for me, was gone. His laugh, too. His careful thinking. His clear knowledge. His amazing work. His remarkable companionship. And he loved me for an equal number of traits. We had been very happy together for 43 years.

Our happiness had been recognized enormously by others. A married relative told me quietly that she had "envied" us for years. A friend, soon marrying, asked us to list what made us so happy, because he wanted help with his own relationship. And during one of our several "getaways" each year, the manager of the Grafton Inn told us, smiling, that he didn't know what to make of us – we seemed too public to be having an affair, but too happy to be married!

Remembering our happy years, I was dreading this anniversary of Roy's passing. But suddenly, a few weeks before the date, my thoughts changed. I'm eager to share this experience with others who may also feel uneasy facing an anniversary, whether it's one year, or five, or twenty-five, since their beloved spouses left this earth.

The change in my thinking began as I was thinking back over our years. We didn't have children (I'd had a problem), but for many years I took pride in helping to grow a man who couldn't have imagined, years earlier, what he would become. He grew me too, surely. But he'd had a very difficult childhood, having been physically and verbally abused by his dreadful mother. She often hit him, smacking him hard on the head. She often shouted at him that he'd end up in jail. Imagine. This remarkable boy – bright and friendly, intelligent and creative – was told that he was beyond hope. But he still had hope. He arranged a full-tuition scholarship for himself at Columbia, and he ran away from home to New York City when he was 17, even before graduating from high school, returning only once during his college years and afterward

to his family in Washington, D.C.

At college, and in all the years following, Roy was fully on his own, working at various jobs, among them writing what were called "toughies" – some of the earliest paperbacks – under 14 different pseudonyms. (The New York Times wrote that one of Roy's books wasn't as good as the books by another writer, and Roy was both writers!)

Well through his twenties, he thought he'd never marry. His parents' constant fighting had remained strong in his mind. But then, at 30, he met me!

Awaiting this anniversary, I realized I had much to celebrate. As I thought happily about what we had done for each other, my sadness dimmed. I could look back with pride, as well as with pleasure and gratitude. Here was a man who was never unpleasant toward me, always thoughtful and loving, generous and caring. And what he did in the weeks before he died was remarkable. We knew two months ahead of time that he wouldn't survive this seventh cancer. He worked fiercely in those two months to build, for me, my life alone. I was a strong person, he told me in many ways, and I was a good person. I would have a life of my own, on my own, he assured me.

I was extremely fortunate to have Roy's words at that time, but I'm sure we can build this strength in ourselves, by ourselves. Whether the death was expected or not, and whether we're now observing an anniversary or not, we can turn our sadness around. Let us treasure our wonderful memories, much as we treasured our wonderful spouse.



Thoughts to Ponder - Editor

"The best bridge between despair and hope is a good night's sleep"

-E. Joseph Coleman

"You may forget with whom you laughed, but you will never forget with whom you wept"

-Kaylill Gibron

"One of the secrets of life is to make stepping stones out of stumbling blocks"

-Jack Penn



sudSSpirit Bereavement Support Group

meets monthly in the following locations:

Berks Chapter

Reading, PA.
4th Wed. of the month
6 PM
Exeter Community Library
4569 Prestwick Drive
Reading, PA 19606
610-406-9431

Bennington Chapter

Bennington, VT
4th Tues. of the month
6 PM
Bennington Free Library
101 Silver Street
Bennington, VT 05201
802-442-9051

For additional information, please check our facebook page or email:

sudsspirit@gmail.com
-Berks, Pennsylvania

sudsspirit.vt@gmail.com
-Bennington, VT

or phone:

717-866-2401
-Berks, Pennsylvania

802-441-5562
-Bennington, VT

- Editor



Missing My “Better Half”

By Dominic Murgido

We all know the phrase “where’s your better half” as people refer to your partner, husband, or wife when they would see you without them on occasion or at events. The question meant a lot more than where is your partner.

Deep down it reflected something that none of us realized. The “better half” played an important role in our lives as a couple and we far too often took it for granted. I miss my better half. I believe my better half really was what the label implied.

She was the glue that kept things together in our lives. She was the planner, the organizer, the encourager, and the inspiration behind my successes. She made me feel comfortable about my life and living it to the fullest with her. She allowed me to grow and become things I never thought I’d be. She made me feel needed and wanted and never alone as I do now at times.

Those of us that have survived the death of our spouse knows that distinct feeling of aloneness that at times comes out of nowhere and overcomes us with great sadness. It is at those times when we know our better half is no longer with us to pick us up again. We miss them.

All of us at one time or many times have wished that the day it happened can be relived and there would be something that we could do or something that could be done to prevent that tragedy from happening to them and to us. We wish that it was all a dream and we would soon wake up from a very long nightmare and life as we knew it would return.

It is not going to happen. We have to acknowledge this and understand that we probably can try to replace some of those feelings we experienced from our better half’s involvement with another partner or a close friend or family member. We can also try to focus on ways that we can become a better person by ourselves through involvement with other activities that are rewarding to us and make us feel better.

Although my better half is no longer with me, she will always be within my heart and close to my soul providing a comfort level that only she knew how to do.

Reprinted from sudSSpirit Quarterly Newsletter: Fall 2011

Five Links to Know

www.whatsyourgrief.com

www.mindfulnessandgrief.com

www.refugeingrief.com

www.centerforloss.com

www.modernloss.com

-Editor

Reflections *By: Mary Nowyj*

Summer was ending, and I was completing my journal reflections, I heard the flock of geese who were obviously heading south to a warmer climate. It reminded me of how many times I’d heard that sound and the odd feelings it stirred within me. That sound signals that we’re heading for winter with closed doors and windows and shorter, darker days.

My husband had died in the middle of summer when the warmth of the sun surrounded me. The approach of winter made me wonder how I would make it through the cold months alone and the calamities that might happen. The elements I had to face alone aroused my insecurities. As summer turned into fall, and then into winter, I cocooned my grief. The darkness of night made it easy for me to hide so others couldn’t see my sorrow. The cold weather and snowy periods kept me inside while I healed from the wounds grief had inflicted on me.

Gradually, as winter turned into spring, the days again became longer and the nights shorter, and one morning I again heard the sound of geese flying overhead as their homecoming signaled the return of warmer weather. It made me think about how I managed my first winter. What had seemed to be a dark tunnel of grief had opened out into brighter days. I was so grateful for the turning point that had helped me to accept nature’s way of teaching and guiding me through the seasons of life.

There are beginnings, middles and endings. There are periods of darkness and light. And there are times where we are dormant but growth is still taking place. Grief is like the cold hard winters in the Northern Hemisphere. It’s a rough time, and getting through it is challenging, but hope emerges as we allow nature to take its course—just like the call of geese changing directions for their survival.

Reprinted with permission from Healing Moments, A Collection of Inspiring Reflections After the Death of a Spouse, By Mary Nowyj, Centering Corporation, Omaha, Nebraska.

Our Mission

sudSSpirit wants to provide you with a supplemental group experience in addition to professional therapy and / or counseling sessions that are currently happening in the lives of those interested.

sudSSpirit does not take the place of professional guidance and we encourage you to seek therapy as required.

sudSSpirit wants to provide a comfortable setting with a sense of community among those in attendance. People should feel free to communicate and share feelings as it pertains to their journey through the grieving process.

sudSSpirit wants those in attendance to realize they are not alone with this problem and the group is available to provide infinite support.

-Editor