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## Welcome *from the Editor*

The last quarter of the year is upon us. A change of seasons. Holidays. A tough time for many as the year ends and we stare into an unknown future. We look back and see ourselves have improved if even just a little bit and we smile at this accomplishment. We know in our hearts that we can do this. We have faith and confidence in ourselves and we know that there are people out there that know how we feel and are there for us no matter what. So stroll among the fallen leaves, watch the snowflakes fall, be thankful and carve a pumpkin. Life continues and we are very much alive and part of it all.

**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](mailto:sudsspirit@gmail.com).

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.**

## Golden Hair and Eyes of Green

*by John Kreiser*

I lay my tired body down  
Anticipating sleep  
And soon my thoughts are swirling 'round  
A void both dark and deep  
Then suddenly, a light appears  
Much like the rising sun  
Illuminating pathways near  
With eagerness, I run  
Down earthen trails to points unknown  
My steps, a measured gait  
I sense that I am not alone  
My pace accelerates  
Into a clearing, I emerge  
A pasture long and wide  
Where cloverleaf and grass converge  
And trees grow by the side  
'Twas here amidst this unspoiled scene  
I glimpsed the one I love  
With golden hair and eyes of green  
There's none I'm fonder of  
She beckoned with her hand, as if  
To say, "come follow me"  
She led me down below a cliff  
Way out beyond the trees  
At last, we reached a stretch of sand  
Just past a thorny hedge  
We sat in silence, hand in hand  
Below that rocky ledge  
She turned to me and touched my face  
And talked with words unspoken  
It's here we shared our first embrace  
The peacefulness unbroken  
I felt relaxed and closed my eyes  
Thoughts floating on the wind  
Of moments shared in paradise  
And love from deep within  
Eventually, I did awake  
But at home - in my bed  
This paradise was all a fake  
Existing in my head  
I smiled, knowing what I'd seen  
Was not all fantasy  
For golden hair and eyes of green  
Was lying next to me

*Reprinted with permission from the author*

## An Entry From My Journal

"My heart aches knowing that my grandchildren will never know and enjoy the love of their grandmother."

-Editor



Dominic Murgido - Editor

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## Quarterly Quote

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"Don't hog your journey, it's not just for you. Think of how many people you can help. Look, you have a choice in life. You can either put your stuff deep in your pockets and take it to your grave or you can help someone"

-Ken Duane

## Resources

- Editor

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

Berks Visiting Nurses  
www.berksvna.org  
610-378-0481

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.bavna.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



## Stop Asking Why *by Dominic Murgido*

Those of us that have lost a loved one are familiar with the sudden unexplainable feelings of sadness and loneliness that we can feel in an instant, out of the blue, without any kind of warning or preparedness that it is about to happen. And it doesn't matter where we are or what we are doing, it is present and affecting us and it is all so real.

These occurrences happen very often in the beginning of the grief journey and with them happening so close to the loss, we could understand that it is happening and really don't question why. It continues throughout the first year, and as most of us can attest to, friends, co-workers, relatives, all say the same thing; "it takes a good year to get over it". I am sure you shuttered at those words as I have. Most of those that never have been through a loss such as ours have no clue and a year is not the marker that any of us should think that we will be healed like turning on a light switch. It's not that easy.

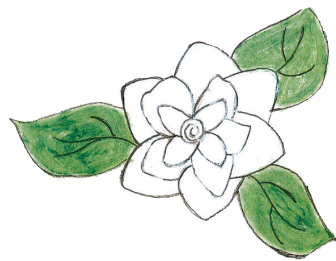
The second and third year comes and these occurrences continue however they come less and the duration of the sadness is shorter. During this time we will start to question our own healing process and wonder if something is "wrong" with us. What we are experiencing is ok and there is nothing wrong with us.

Time moves on and we carry on in our lives missing our loved one but realizing that we have to move forward in order to heal and get better with our lives. And then those feelings of sadness come again to us and this time we are concerned and also question why? We will take time to analyze why. We may lose sleep over why. We may get sick over why. We will spend many hours if not days wondering why, but there are no answers to this question.

It still happens to me. It just did recently out of the blue, no warning, in an instant. I was spiraling down into sadness and loneliness right after having a pleasant evening at home watching a good movie. It came and went and by the next morning, I was ok again.

I stopped asking why. There are no answers to these occurrences. I started accepting the fact that this will happen on occasion and that it is ok. It is part of the big picture of the grief journey that I am on. It does not come as often anymore and it may eventually stop coming altogether. But I don't know and I am not going to worry about it one way or the other. Acceptance should become part of your vocabulary. Be patient with yourself and certainly don't expect more than what you can handle at the present time.

*Published previously in Spring 2011 Quarterly Newsletter*



### Book Review - Editor

### Grief Works

*by Julia Samuel*

This book covers from the expected death of a parent to the sudden death of a child or spouse—as well as a guide for those who want to help their grieving loved ones.

**Grief Works** addresses the fear that surrounds death and grief and replaces it with confidence. Samuel is a caring and deeply experienced guide through the shadowy and mutable land of grief, and her book is as invaluable to those who are grieving as it is to those around them.

People need to understand that grief is a process that has to be worked through, and Samuel shows if we do the work, we can begin to heal. The stories here explain how grief unmasks our greatest fears, strips away our layers of protection, and reveals our innermost selves.

Divided into case histories grouped by who has died—a partner, a parent, a sibling, a child, as well as a section dealing with terminal illness and suicide—Grief Works shows us how to live and learn from great loss.

### Thoughts to Ponder - Editor

"All joy had to be laced with darkness, simply to have a contrasting validity"

*The Catch – Mayor*

"Believe me, every heart has its secret sorrows, which the world knows not, and oftentimes we call a man cold, when he is only sad"

*-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

"You cannot have a positive life and a negative mind"

*-Joyce Meyer*





## Widowers' Grief *by Jane Glenn Haas*

Her clothes still fill the closet in the master bedroom.

Twenty months after his wife, Fern, died, Jack Farrington can't bring himself to sort her personal items. Many of her clowns are gone -- the dolls and figurines and refrigerator magnets she collected -- and her bedroom in their home in Orange, Calif., is his computer room.

But her clothes? "Let's just say there are a lot of them," he says. "We don't need to look at them."

Farrington, 80, is a widower struggling to adjust to life without the woman he met during World War II, when both of them were in the U.S. Coast Guard.

He didn't expect to be alone like this. Few men do.

Almost 1 million married people died in 1996. Two-thirds of them were husbands. They left widows who find support in grief groups, in books, each other.

There are eight widows for every widower among the 13 million widowed people in the U.S.

It's little wonder that many of the widows become frantic to find a new mate. Farrington fended off one woman who wanted to bring cooked dinners to his home regularly.

It's little wonder that men who lose their wives feel adrift.

Society expects men to walk tall through their grief, yet offers little male-related support. Each man we talked to felt he made the journey alone, even when friends and family were around.

"I became furiously busy," says Farrington, whose wife died one month before their 50th anniversary. "I went through all the swings of emotion: anger, fear, loneliness. Being busy helped."

Keeping busy also protected him from predators.

A year after his wife died, another woman asked him to spend a Saturday night in her bed.

"Oh, I can't do that!" Farrington replied, saying he had to be at church the next morning.

There is no "manly" way to grieve, the experts say. There are many ways to cope with loss that have more to do with personality than gender.

Given society's need to pigeon-hole people, however, there is a stereotype for a man who loses his wife: two or three months of woe, then suck it up and get on with living. Solve your problem by getting remarried.

Stereotypes exist because they often are true.

"Many men are what I call 'instrumental grievers,'" says Ken Doka, senior consultant for

the Hospice Foundation of America. "They grieve in a more cognitive way."

In other words, they don't show emotions.

This attitude makes men "stoic and manly," Doka says. Men who do cry are "warm and fuzzy."

"On the other hand, we expect women to be more emotional, so when they approach grief in a cognitive way, we think they are cold and uncaring."

Men and women switch roles in widowhood. Men often have to learn to be more caring and more social in widowhood, says Phyllis R. Silverman, an expert on social development and bereavement. "Women often hold the home together and men depend on them to be their social secretary."

On the other hand, women who are widowed often have to learn to be more self-reliant, she says. "There's a crossover."

Silverman co-wrote "Widower: When Men Are Left Alone" (Baywood Publishing Co., Amityville, N.Y.). "We have to become more aware of people's long-term needs to grieve," she says.

Not a great proponent of grief groups -- "They sometimes deprive people of what they can do for themselves" -- she does encourage widowers to reach out to a friend, to others.

"I think a bereavement service of some kind is necessary," says Joan Gibala, senior program specialist with the American Association of Retired Persons' grief and loss service. "That can be talking to somebody who's been widowed. It can be a support group. We do three on-line grief support groups each week, and some people prefer that anonymity. Some people read extensively; others keep journals."

"The important thing is: Don't ignore it."

Don Anderson, 69, of Dana Point, Calif., has turned his experience into a positive, instrumental action by being a friend to other men who lose their wives.

Sixteen years after his wife of 33 years died of pancreatic cancer, he still relives the experience:

"The loss? There is no way anybody can describe what happens. You have to experience it, and you don't want to, of course."

"You can't expect people who haven't gone through it to understand what's going on. The grief is an all-encompassing thing."

"You are alone. There is nobody to share. As good as the support group, the church programs, the friends, it is not the same. Still, you must come to grips with the grief. People who shut it off collapse eventually."

*Reprinted with permission: Orange County Register, Anaheim, CA*

### **sudSSpirit** **Bereavement Support** **Group**

meets monthly in the following locations:

#### **Berks Chapter**

Reading, PA.

4<sup>th</sup> Wed. of the month  
6 PM

Exeter Community Library  
4569 Prestwick Drive  
Reading, PA 19606  
610-406-9431

#### **Bennington Chapter**

Bennington, VT

4<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:sudsspirit@gmail.com)  
-Berks, Pennsylvania

[sudsspirit.vt@gmail.com](mailto:sudsspirit.vt@gmail.com)  
-Bennington, VT

or phone:

**717-866-2401**  
-Berks, Pennsylvania

**802-441-5562**  
-Bennington, VT

- Editor





## Coming to terms with grief starts by accepting detours *by Heidi Stevens*

Catherine Tidd was 31 when she lost her Air Force officer husband in a motorcycle accident. Their kids were 5, 3 and 18 months. The moment she heard, "He's not going to make it," changed her life forever. Of course it did.

"But the change into the person I became didn't happen in that moment," she writes in her new book, "Confessions of a Mediocre Widow" (Sourcebooks). "It didn't happen as I was riding in the passenger seat of my mother's minivan on the way home from the hospital. And it didn't happen at the funeral."

The gigantic, terrifying changes — forever a widow, suddenly a single mom — happened immediately. But equally gigantic changes took a more gradual pace.

Her transformation, for example, into a person who can go off script — whose "script" was, in essence, torn into bits and stomped all over — and still find moments of joy. Her tossing aside of pretense, and her open-armed embrace of candor.

"Not one of us is living the life we expected to when we were young," Tidd told me during a recent interview. "Once you realize that, I think the question becomes what you do with that and how you choose to grow from it."

Bradley, Tidd's husband, died in 2007. (He was 34.) She spent the initial months in stunned disbelief. She struggled to find her footing, even as she worried she wasn't acting "widow enough." Did she look sufficiently grief-stricken? Did she donate his clothes too soon? Were pedicures the best use of her time and money? Should she send out Christmas cards?

"I wish someone had told me from the beginning there's no right way to do this," she said. "The five stages of grief don't happen in order, and they happen over and over again. But you feel like you're being judged on how you're coping and what you're doing, and you constantly think you're failing."

Which is partly why she wrote the book.

"I wanted to be as raw and honest as I could," she said. "I wanted people to read it and say, 'Yes, that's me! I'm not crazy! I'm not alone!'" She wrote it for anyone who has grieved the loss of a cherished soul, and for anyone who has borne witness to a loved one's grief.

"I also wanted to bring awareness to what the people who are trying to support us go through," she said. "Sometimes we can't see past our own grief to the intentions of others, and we don't always let others know what we're feeling. When my dad read the book for the first time, he said, 'I had no idea what you were going through.' And I talk to him every day. He just didn't know the depths."

There's a world of beauty packed inside Tidd's book.

Her humor: "I spent my 11th wedding anniversary planning my husband's funeral. If I could figure out how to make that rhyme, it would be the beginning of a great country song."

Her honesty: That funeral veered spectacularly off course and ended with her doubled over in laughter at "the Pennsylvania preacher who missed his chance on 'American Idol.'"

Her wisdom: "It takes a lot more time and effort to deny yourself the grief you feel than it does to work to accept the life — including the grief — that is now yours."

Her mettle: She pours the past seven years onto pages for all of us to read and learn from, particularly her "Tips for widow(er)s and those who support them." Her take-down of the empty platitudes we mutter to people who are suffering ("He's in a better place." "Everything happens for a reason.") should be required reading for all humankind.

Through it all, she gently reminds us that our lives will take us places we never meant to go and feel unprepared for. She keeps a card on display that reads, "A truly happy person is the one who can enjoy the scenery on a detour."

"Since I don't know of a bigger detour in life than widowhood," she writes, "I'm doing my best to enjoy the scenery along the way to wherever it is that I'm going."

We'd all do well to follow her lead.

*Reprinted with permission: Chicago Tribune, Chicago, IL*

## Celebrate? Yes, Celebrate!

*by Ellen Perry Berkeley*

Celebrate? Yes, that's my suggestion.

It isn't a firm instruction, like "Repair your roof or you'll see your attic ruined." It's just a thought. And since other people's thoughts are often helpful, consider whether this thought of mine could be helpful to you.

Our initial response to this idea, of course, is that it's crazy. We've lost someone who was immensely important in our life. How can we be "happy" about this?

But I didn't say "Be happy." I said "Celebrate."

-- Go to a party. Or give a party. That is, arrange a "gathering." You've always loved the gatherings of friends. And they've always loved the exact same cookies your spouse loved.

-- Go somewhere for fun, perhaps a place you and your spouse visited, or perhaps a new place — on a day trip or an overnight. You've always been eager to return to places you've loved, and eager to see places you've only heard about. Get back to this person you've always been.

-- Celebrate your birthday, the holidays, the first day of Spring, whatever. Buy a cake. Have some flowers.

Sure, you've experienced a major change in your life. But there's still a part of you that wants to be with friends, wants to visit an exciting place, wants to laugh, to hug, to share. Know that humans are hard-wired for pleasure. Remind yourself that joy is good for us.

Don't worry if anyone is asking you, not pleasantly, "Have you really stopped grieving?" True friends will be entirely with you, helping you return to life.

You'll still be grieving. You'll be sad that your beloved isn't with you, at a gathering, or on a trip, or for your birthday. But know that

your spouse would be glad that you're celebrating life, in whatever ways you can.

Actually, being alive is one of the most basic things to celebrate — especially if we can celebrate it without guilt. Let's accept our new life without any apology or embarrassment that we're still here, enjoying things we did with our spouse, and things we've just discovered. What an odd exchange it has been! Sadly, we've lost our soulmate. But happily we've also experienced relief that we'll no longer witness our spouse's increasingly difficult decline or increasingly difficult pain. (And let's understand that this relief has probably been a relief for the two of us.)

Some of our activities now can celebrate our spouse's life quite directly. We can be helpful, for instance, to the friends and family whom our spouse was assisting. We can volunteer where our spouse was volunteering. We can give friendship to people who had mostly looked to our other half for closeness. We can even finish a project that our spouse left unfinished. I've done this with a book that Roy had started. I've given Roy's extensive files (and the writing he'd already done) to a person he knew — a fellow with a strong interest in the book's subject, and with a publishing history himself. This person has just completed the manuscript, quoting Roy wherever possible and putting Roy's name alongside his own as co-author. A publisher is now being sought. We all leave things unfinished when we die, but I'm celebrating the likelihood that Roy's work on this book will see print.

For all the celebratory things mentioned above — parties, travels, birthdays, and surely there's more — I'm not insisting that we go off immediately and "celebrate." No, I'm simply thinking that we shouldn't AVOID celebrating.

More importantly, perhaps, we shouldn't avoid acknowledging that we're strong, and partly because of the departure of our dearly beloved. And we're stronger than we could have imagined. We must celebrate that!

We can continue to grieve, whenever and however we need to. But we must celebrate our strength to live with this new situation. Let's never forget that we have the strength to celebrate what has gone before, what is happening now, and what is yet to be.