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## Welcome *from the Editor*

A new year begins and with that new year hope and faith as we continue on our grief journey in search of peace and maybe new beginnings. We strive to find a sense of normalcy in our lives while trying to balance what once was with what's now new. We seek guidance and wisdom from those around us to better ourselves in our quest for a new outlook on life and all that it has to offer. *Happy New Year!*

**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. A Facebook page is also available, please find and Like us on Facebook. 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).

*In this issue:* You will always find the Quarterly Quote, Thoughts to Ponder, A real entry from my own personal journal along the way, a Book Review, our Dedication corner, and a poem by John Kreiser. But that's not all. Pat Schwiebert asks what a New Year means? Guilt trips are explained by Ellen Perry

Berkeley while our editor talks about the best that you can do. Laura Leanne talks about being a 26 yr old widow.

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.***

## Questions

*by John Kreiser*

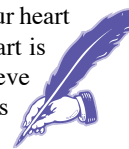
I had a wife I truly loved  
My soulmate sent by God above  
And though her death set us apart  
She'll always occupy my heart  
But now, my future is unknown  
Will I grow old and die alone?  
Is there a plan not yet revealed?  
A way for shattered hearts to heal?  
I'll always have the love we shared  
A special bond without compare  
These cherished thoughts of her and me  
Emblazoned in my memory  
But is there more? Another page?  
A second act upon life's stage?  
Can I move on without regret?  
To love again, but not forget?  
The unique bond that we shared first  
Essential to my universe  
Is it betrayal to discover  
The feelings I'd have for another?  
Some vexing questions to be sure  
And ones I lack the answers for

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## An Entry From My Journal

"I think I realized the separation between your heart and your mind. As much as your mind knows you have to be better, survive your loss, your tragedy; your heart has a different take on it. Your heart is with your soul and what you believe in, what you long for, what you miss the most."

*-Editor*



Dominic Murgido - Editor

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### Quarterly Quote

*- Editor*

**"The question is NOT: why did this happen or where is it going to lead you, or what is the price you have to pay? It is simply: how are you making use of it?"**

*-Dag*

*Hammar skjold*



## 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.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

Lutheran Home Care & Hospice  
www.lutheranhomecare.org  
610-320-7979



## The Best That You Can Do *by Dominic Murgido*

One of the most difficult issues I have been dealing with since my wife, Sue, died is my search for where I should be in life. Not just where in terms of what I should be doing and for what purpose but also the where in terms of geographical location. A struggle that I have yet to conquer but I keep trying.

One never knows the contentment and satisfaction one feels with their life until a life changing moment occurs like the death of your spouse or significant other and then you have to re think your future all over again. Your world turned upside down; the rug was pulled out from under you; a physically and mentally challenge to your body and mindset as to what do you do now?

At times I think I am the only one with this problem, or at least the only one that is this distraught over this effect it has on me and how much time I spend dwelling on it. Others I have spoken to are coming along fine, maintaining their daily schedules and lives and pretty much are where they have been but minus the one they loved so dear. Others have made some changes; perhaps they relocated to another home or apartment, moved to another town to be closer to family, or moved in with another person.

I have accepted my grief journey and I have accepted what has happened to me and I strive to help others with their journeys of grief but I have not accepted where I should be or what I should be doing or where I should be doing it? People I speak to about this dilemma of mine say that I am searching for something that does not exist. Others say that my searching is what I am doing and is where I should be; meeting new people, helping others, relocating, trying new things, learning, exploring, writing, and sharing. Be happy with the present, the now, they say. Don't over think it.

I am not sure what the answer is, if there is an answer. I sometimes think that I am over thinking it but I can't deny that I feel like something is missing in my life, something tangible as well as spiritual and that is "this search" I speak about.

I have made so many changes, decisions, allowing myself to explore, create, meet head on, switch, become vulnerable, take risks, cry, laugh, express, and pray. Some of the things I planned out, methodically, while others were spur of the moment ideas that I carried out to see what would happen. Whatever the case, no regrets. I did it and doing it made me feel worthwhile and

in control of my own destiny, for that moment in time. And then, I needed more. It seems I am never content with where I am

and what I am doing. I look back at my life with my spouse and I was very content with where I was; sharing a life with her. Am I looking for that missing piece that I lost when I lost her? And after this many years should I finally realize that I will never be able to duplicate that?

So, what's the answer? Is there an answer? Is this really a problem? It can be one man's search for a destiny he has yet to encounter. Will the search be endless? Perhaps the search should never end for the search is part of the life I now lead.

Whatever the future holds for me, I know that change is inevitable and nothing really stays the same.

A common expression voiced by many is this: "It is what it is ...but it will become what you make it." We all should try to do the best that we can do. As this New Year begins, I wish you all peace and comfort in your own personal journeys.



### Book Review - Editor

#### With Those Who Grieve

*by Kay Soder-Alderfer*

A collection of stories from people who have survived the grief process is in this book. The author puts together this variety of emotions and feelings through the stories of loss, pain, and hope.

Each grief process is different as is reflected in the courage of those willing to share their stories in this collection. The telling of their stories is the healing for them and all of us as we proceed through this grief journey.

I personally found these stories very heartwarming and moving. I was touched by so many of their thoughts and feelings that I was able to gain validation for some of my own feelings.



# Guilt Trips? Bad Journeys *by Ellen Perry Berkeley*

Guilt over a loved one's death is often felt, but rarely discussed. Can we dump some of this guilt – and without incurring further guilt in the process?

You may ask: What about someone returning from work, or shopping, or attending a movie, to find the lifeless spouse sprawled out on the floor. Could this death have been prevented if someone else had been home? Who knows?

And what about fatal accidents – on the highway, in the bathtub, on the stairs? Such situations can give survivors an overwhelming guilt. Rightfully so? Again, who knows?

Let's look instead at other situations, where self-blame seems best tossed out the window.

ONE: Think of the husband (someone I know) who delayed making an appointment to check the brakes on his car. The very next day, his wife lost control of the car on an icy road. But did anything else contribute to this catastrophic crash that took her life? The husband should remind himself that she often fiddled with the radio dial, her eyes off the road.

TWO: For myself, I've wondered whether I could've helped to catch Roy's salivary-gland cancer in time. We did get a second opinion, and we did have the surgery done at an excellent hospital. For two months before that surgery, we followed the treatment from our excellent dentist. He thought that Roy's palate needed only antibiotics. To be honest, I now feel that any blame should stay with the surgeon, who refrained from more extensive surgery (closer to the eye) because he thought it might cause blindness on that side. Roy and I weren't consulted about this. Roy died within the year, the remaining cancer having spread to his bones.

THREE: How about when the deceased hasn't taken good care of himself? A friend of mine couldn't get her good husband to a doctor for what the husband considered only a lingering bronchitis. When she finally prevailed over this tough-minded guy, he was diagnosed with lung cancer and died within a few months. Alas, when she lost this argument (undoubtedly one of many in their marriage), he lost his life. Is she "guilty"? Hardly.

FOUR: Another friend lost her husband when he ended his difficult life by shooting himself. No advance notice to her. They'd been to every possible doctor, and none could diagnose, or fix, this man's unbearable pain. My friend has struggled with guilt at not preventing his

suicide. But I prefer to think that by not trying to dissuade him, she allowed him to follow his own thinking about what life meant to him. Can anyone truly understand another person's pain?

On the day Roy died, I experienced someone "guilting" me, but I didn't fall for it. I'd been with Roy all day. The hospital thought he wouldn't last the week. He was heavily sedated but he often smiled at me. I drove home totally exhausted. Hours later someone telephoned me, saying brusquely, "Your husband has died" and asking if I'd be coming in. I said no, to the surprise (and disapproval) of this fellow. But Roy and I had already said our many goodbyes, and I didn't feel guilty at not returning to his bedside that night.

Our beloved spouse wouldn't want us to suffer a huge guilt along with everything else, especially when we haven't deserved it. Yes, there's always "survivor's guilt," felt by many. And there's usually guilt over our relief that the death occurred before things got any worse – and relief that a full-time caregiver is no longer needed. But this guilt needn't become a "blame game."

Consider your own guilt feelings. If we think we haven't done what's right, or what's sufficient, we can acknowledge this to ourselves, much as we admit any misstep in life, large or small. We can surely forgive ourselves, and we can surely know that our beloved has forgiven us. We needn't rush off on a guilt trip that is not only inappropriate but also makes our grieving more difficult.



## Thoughts to Ponder - Editor

"The eager fate which carried thee took the largest part of me: for this losing is true dying."

*-Ralph Waldo Emerson*

"Grief is a matter of relativity; the sorrow should be estimated by its proportion to the sorrowed; a gash is as painful to one as an amputation is to another."

*-Percy Bysshe Shelley*

"It is sweet to mingle tears with tears; griefs, when they wound in solitude, would more deeply."

*-Seneca*



## **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*





## I Became a 26 year old Widow by Laura Leanne

Life throws everybody curve balls. They can be minimal, or heartbreaking, but they are unexpected. On the morning of December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2016, I would never imagine that it would be the last time I would wake up next to my husband, James. I would never believe that our last kiss was when the clock struck midnight while we celebrated the New Year's entrance.

My wonderful husband passed away just a few hours after that kiss. He died instantly without any warning. I had no idea I was watching him take his last breath. I could write a full book on that night, not that I remember everything. I could explain how my brain couldn't comprehend what was happening and how I suddenly felt abandoned, alone and confused.

That all sounds sad, and trust me it is, but instead of dwelling on that, I want to write about what I have been learning through my grief. You simply cannot control many things in life. The only thing that you can control is yourself and your responses to things. That is exactly what I have been learning to do.

I remember a few months after James passed away, trying to figure out what makes me happy. Although I don't believe there is any silver lining to my story, I tried to think what could still bring me joy in life. At first when I started traveling, my favorite part was that no one knew who I was. No one knew my story. No one could look at me with sympathy or ask how I was "holding up". In fact, I thought that was the reason I enjoyed traveling so much. It was not until I had been traveling for a few months that I realized why I loved it so much.

I was living life.

Experiencing new places made me feel proud, confident and alive. I had the opportunity to see places that James never got to see. So far, I have been to 16 countries since James passed away. That number is continuing to grow. At first when I was traveling, I did not tell anyone my story. In fact, sometimes I even used a fake name (Leanne, which is my middle name). As time went on and I realized why I

was truly traveling, I began opening up to people. It was not a topic of conversation on a regular basis however; if I started traveling with someone for a few days and we were talking about our pasts I would bring it up.

Most people were shocked. Some cried. Most just could not believe they were sitting beside someone who seemed to be so "okay" when they had such a terrible thing happen to them. The thing about travel is that you meet so many different people along the way. I talked to people that were given everything in life but suddenly felt lost and stuck. I've met people that came from nothing but have somehow, against all odds, figured out a way to build a better life. I've met people from so many different countries with so many different stories.

Do you know what I realized?

Living is a decision. So many people go through life thinking they are living when really just going through the motions. It does not matter your past; the decision just comes down to you. There are many ways I could have reacted to my husband's sudden death. I have days where I struggle. I have days where I'm confused why I'm suddenly on the other side of the world without the love of my life by my side. Of course, every day is not a rainbow; I'll be the first to admit that! However, bungee jumping in Scotland and paragliding in Slovenia was my choice. My choice is to live.

Seeing someone that I love suddenly stop getting the opportunity to live made me realize that I have a choice. Your life is a choice. Nothing you have done or nothing in your past defines you, especially when it is completely out of your control. Becoming a 26-year-old widow does not define me. Picking myself up and deciding to live defines the person that I am today and the person that I have become. Embrace yourself and embrace life.

"The dark season shaped who I am now, but it no longer defines me."

*Laura started an Instagram account just 30 days after her husband passed away. While reading various quotes, she began putting stories to them. She shares her entire journey of love, loss and moving forward. Laura decided to start guest blogging so that she could start going into more detail on her grief process and moving forward. Follow her on Instagram at @AdventuresAfterYou75*

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## So What Does a New Year Mean? by Pat Schwiebert, R.N.

In simplistic terms when life was uncomplicated by grief it meant starting over...a clean slate...making resolutions to clean up our act. Some of us like the feeling of getting a fresh start and forgetting the past. We like believing that, during this next year, things will be better.

But when we are grieving, our tendency is to stand at the threshold of a new year looking back rather than forward. We fear that to walk through that door into a New Year means leaving our lost loved one behind. To move on seems like an act of betrayal of or abandonment of the one we love. There may also be a fear of forgetting, or maybe a fear of letting go. We experience a contradiction: we want to feel better, but at what cost?

Remember, January 1st is just another day. It has no meaning or power except the meaning we choose to give to it. Acknowledging our special needs as grieving persons, we can choose to make softer resolutions for the New Year—resolutions that can still be challenging, yet are not unrealistic. Why not frame your New Year's resolutions in terms of

hope for a gentler year; for gaining control of your emotions, for better understanding of the grief process and what we can learn about ourselves as we journey thru it? Why not resolve to enter into a future that can be good, even though it lacks all that we might desire, and offers a hope that we will be at peace with sorrow and enjoy life even though we grieve.

We've learned a lot this past year. We have experienced corporate, public grief, following many lives lost in shootings, terror attacks. And we have experienced personal grief. We know we are not the only ones who grieve, though sometimes we have felt all alone. And still we survive, even though at times we questioned if the struggle was worth it. We have tasted the bitterness of loss but have not allowed it to destroy us. And together we will rise out of the ashes of grief and say YES to life. None of us can do it alone. We need each other to lean on and celebrate our newness.

Our hope for those in the throes of fresh grief is that someday your days will again bring you more joy... more music...more laughter... more gratitude...more friends...more surprises...more memories.

**Note: Edited for space. Reprinted with permission: [griefwatch.com](http://griefwatch.com)**