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## Welcome *from the Editor*

As this issue is published beginning our 7<sup>th</sup> year, We would like to announce the opening of a 5<sup>th</sup> Chapter of **sudSSpirit**. Our most recent new chapter is in Lebanon County, PA. We will be meeting at the Annville Free Library on the third Tuesday of each month and would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Dee Neff, Director of the Annville Free Library, Annville, PA for allowing **sudSSpirit** the space to help those in need.

The Fall season brings many holidays that can be emotional to us; Halloween, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. The end of one year and the beginning of the New Year can also have its hold on us. It is during these times, that you must seek help if you need to through a support group or private counseling

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 five chapters. We also have a list of other resources on page two in the left margin that may be helpful to you. A Face book page is also available, please check that out. 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 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:*

With the holidays fast approaching, we include an article on how to deal with them. Two poems are also presented as reflections as well as our feature article on "Living with it". "Forgive My Bragging" by our contributing writer and fellow **sudSSpirit** attendee, Ellen Perry Berkeley, explores a topic that is very often discussed in our support groups. We also repeat an article from a previous edition about "The Story Behind the **sudSSpirit** Logo" since this question is asked so often.

**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, Etters, PA, Dover, PA, Lebanon, 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."

## Three Years Gone

*by John Kresier*

Been three long years, I've journeyed on  
Without you by my side  
This loneliness is hard to bear  
It's quite a joyless ride  
O'er thirty years, we shared this life  
Increasing love's sweet bond  
I thought that it would always be  
Tomorrow and beyond  
My life was blessed the day we met  
My soulmate had been found  
Two halves made whole, two dreams fulfilled  
Two hearts forever bound  
Your absence from my daily life  
Brings emptiness, despair  
I never thought I'd be alone  
Without you here to share  
Reluctantly, with heavy heart  
I face each coming day  
My life was changed forever on  
That day you went away  
Fore'er apart in flesh and bone  
This seems to be our fate  
Yet love endures beyond the grave  
You'll always be my mate.

*Reprinted with permission from Author. Poem dated 4-10-2010*

Dominic Murgido - Editor

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## Quarterly Quote

*- Editor*

*"He who cannot  
forgive others  
breaks the bridge  
over which  
he must pass  
himself."*

*- George Herbert*

## 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

VNA & Hospice of Southwestern  
Vermont Health Care  
www.svhealthcare.org  
802-442-5502

Bayada Hospice Services  
www.bayada.com  
855-696-2072

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

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



## Living with it by Dominic Murgido

It comes as fast as an unpredictable thunderstorm and catches you completely off guard. It hurts your heart and brings numbness to your soul. Your eyes well up with tears and you begin to cry. You feel empty, your heart aches, and you want to be alone right now.

Something brought it on and you struggle to figure out what? Sometimes, you know and sometimes you don't, and that's ok. But for whatever reason, you are experiencing an emotion connecting you to the loss of a loved one.

This happens throughout the rest of your life, sometimes harder than other times, but there is a potential for it to happen to you anytime, anywhere. There is no stopping it or controlling it. It is now a part of you and you have to learn to *live with it*.

*Living with it* can be challenging. You think that it should not happen after three, seven, or even ten years, but it does and may continue to follow you as you move forward with your life.

Most people don't understand this unless they also have experienced this and have lost a loved one that was so much a part of their life. The love that we had for them never went away and we continue to love them for being the person they were for us. Some of us still feel their presence, say their name out loud when we are alone, talk with them as we lie in bed at night,

seek advice and guidance about the life we now lead without them.

They continue to be a part of our lives living in our hearts and subconscious and occupying our souls with their love for us.

They want us to be happy and not to dwell on their passing and our loss of them.

Time passes and over the years it is hard not to be affected by a trigger of some kind that will bring back a memory of an event from the past you shared with them. It makes you miss them all over again and at times it feels like it just happened, even though time and reality tells us it was long ago.

"Time is an equal opportunity employer. All of us have exactly the same number of hours and minutes every day. Wealthy people can't buy more time. Scientists can't invent new minutes. And you can't save time to spend on another day." (Author Unknown)

Using your time wisely and allowing yourself to experience the occasional thunderstorm knowing that there is a silver lining out there ahead of you, makes good sense. The harshness of your hurt will pass like the thunderstorm and you will feel good again. Don't dwell on the whys and feel bad for yourself. You are not alone in this. It's all about *living with it*.

## Deep Sobs by Norah Leney

Deep Sobs –

That start beneath my heart  
And hold my body in a grip that hurts.  
The lump that swells inside my throat  
Brings pain that tries to choke.  
Then tears course down my cheeks-  
I drop my head in my so empty hands  
Abandoning myself to deep dark grief  
And know that with the passing time  
Will come relief.

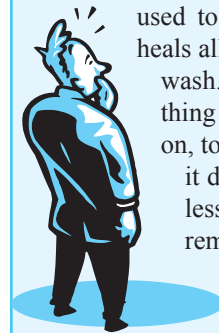
That thought the pain may stay  
There soon will come a day  
When I can say her name  
And be at peace.

*Reprinted with permission: Healing Words for Wounded Hearts, selected by Paul B. Whitman*

## Thoughts to Ponder

- Editor

"At a memorial service for a departed friend, words, experiences, even laughter, mingle with tears and are shared. It's after that that the real gnaw begins; the day in, day out knowledge that that particular voice – that special connection, that unspoken commitment, the thread that tied you together – is broken, gone, that you will never see that face or hear that voice again. You never get used to it. The old saw that time heals all wounds doesn't quite wash. Time helps – it's the only thing that does; it helps you to go on, to live, to laugh, to love – but it doesn't help you to forget or lessen the tiny stab of pain that remembrance brings."



-Excerpt from *Now*  
by Lauren Bacall

## Forgive My Bragging *by Ellen Perry Berkeley*

I've been bragging. In a moment, I'll tell you why. First, though, a couple of questions. Was it difficult to begin weeding through everything your beloved spouse used and collected and saved? And have you finished this chore, with all the selling and consigning and gifting and donating and shredding and trashing?

My husband died in 2009. Some things went easily -- his computers (he was a published writer, of fiction and non-fiction), his books (he was a teacher, of American history through folk music), his guitars (in 1958 he was the first folksinger hired by a coffeehouse in Greenwich Village), his cameras (he was a professional photographer), his uniforms (he was a deputy sheriff).

But then there was all the paper stuff. Roy and I kept everything. In 2010, I moved to an "independent cottage" in a nearby retirement community. With someone ready to buy the house, I removed all our bins and boxes of "stuff," stashing them against any welcoming wall inside the cottage, and stacking them wall-to-wall throughout the cottage garage. The "stuff" -- more than 100 containers, early on -- has stayed mostly where I dumped it. I've simply looked the other way, walked carefully, and decided that my car was happy living in the driveway.

At a recent meeting of my bereavement group, the subject of "stuff" came up, and everyone moaned and groaned. While many people offer to help with this chore, we know we must do it alone. Do we still want the birthday greeting from a person whose name doesn't even ring a distant bell? Do we still want the photos from a get-away where the scenery wasn't even slightly interesting? Do we still want the Playbill for a performance we can't even recall attending? Some decisions are easy. All take their sweet time.

Before I left our meeting, I made a promise to myself (and to the group) to tackle this "stuff" for 15 minutes every other day. Not a big commitment. Within a week, though, I was doing 15 minutes twice a day. (Never back-to-back. These efforts were always separated by almost anything else.)

I bragged excitedly to my grief group. In that month alone I did a huge number of sessions -- 64! And the next month I chalked up an even higher total. The main accomplishment for me, however, was getting to the chore at all. I can almost hear my husband saying, "Good job, Lovey." I can definitely hear my friends in the bereavement group saying, "Wow, thanks! That's worth trying."

In this experience, I've seen anew the special value of a bereavement group. We understand things that can barely be put into words. When we do

find words, the communication is special (and unlike what we'd have with people who haven't been through what we've been through). This closeness occurs whether we're confronting our first vacation alone or our first birthday alone, and now I know that it occurs with our first real attempt to get "un-stuffed" alone. Think about when a dear cat dies. The people who've never loved a cat will say, "Well, it was just a cat." But the people who've experienced this sadness themselves can give fully of their sympathy -- without judgment and possibly without words -- maybe with only a nod, a smile, a hug.

Forgive my bragging. But I hope my success encourages you, if you've been similarly "stuffed." Dig out your kitchen timer. Promise yourself a treat -- perhaps a scoop of ice cream -- when you leap up, freed from your 15 minutes every day or two. And be ready to brag to your own bereavement group. Your fellow-grievers will understand. They know all about "stuff" themselves, and about how it prevents us from moving on. They won't berate you for postponing this chore for years. They'll only celebrate your progress (and soon, their own progress), not just in the tidying chore but also in the grieving process.

*The author is a long-time and grateful member of our sudSSpirit group in Bennington, VT.*



### Book Review - Editor

## The Widower's Toolbox; Repairing your Life after Losing your Spouse

*by Gerald J. Schaefer  
with Tom Bekkers, MSW, APSW*

Written by one who knows, a survivor of the loss of his wife to breast cancer, the author writes a book for the estimated half-million widowers who lose their wives annually. An outstanding reference divided into four parts that include; Picking up the pieces, Healing from within, Giving back to others, and Loving again, Schaefer provides insight and instruction on the handling of your grief journey and how different it is for the male to grieve in today's world. At the end of every chapter, the author suggests tasks and reflection questions as well as activities that will enable you to think, reflect, and move forward with your journey.

### sudSSpirit

Bereavement Support Group  
currently meets monthly in  
**five** locations:

**Berks Chapter**, Reading, PA.  
4<sup>th</sup> Wed. of the month 6 PM  
Exeter Library

**Cumberland Chapter**,  
Etters, PA.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Thurs. of the month 7 PM  
Fishing Creek  
Salem U.M. Church

**York Chapter**,  
Dover, PA.  
3<sup>rd</sup> Mon. of the month 6:30 PM  
Dover Area Community  
Library

**Bennington Chapter**,  
Bennington, VT  
4<sup>th</sup> Tues. of the month 6 PM  
Bennington Library

**Lebanon Chapter**,  
Annville, PA  
3<sup>rd</sup> Tues. of the month 6 PM  
Annville Free Library

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

[sudsspirit@gmail.com](mailto:sudsspirit@gmail.com)  
- Reading and Lebanon, PA  
[lmurray2@comcast.net](mailto:lmurray2@comcast.net)  
- Etters, PA

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

or phone:  
717-866-2401 - Reading,  
Lebanon and York, PA  
717-938-1928 (ext 241)  
- Etters, PA  
802-441-5562  
- Bennington, VT

- Editor



## Grief during the Holidays

Grieving during the Holidays is difficult; especially the first Holiday cycle after the passing of a loved one. Whatever your age, whatever the cause of death, holidays lived in the absence of a Loved One can be a very difficult time. Customary routines are ended, never to be repeated in quite the same way. Easy-going laughter, once flowing so naturally, may become awkward or even altogether missing. Gift-giving, once so filled with fun, may seem somehow empty and sad. Familiar songs, once so comforting, may catch in your throat or bring tears to your eyes.

All this happens against a backdrop of significant questions you may find yourself asking: What exactly is happening to me? Can I possibly survive this, and do I even want to? How long will this turmoil last? Is what I am feeling normal? Am I losing touch with my sanity?

The holiday period itself adds its own share of questions: How can I make it through all the events of the holidays while missing so desperately the one I love? Would I be better off to ignore the holidays this year? Should I act as if everything were normal? Should I

make major changes in my holiday rituals?

If you're like most people in grief, you will have many questions. It's important for you to know at the outset that there are few universal "right" and "wrong" answers. There may be various answers, depending upon the unique factors of your situation: who you are as a person, what your family is like, who it was who died, when and how they died, what your relationship with the departed was, and the role that person played in your holiday rituals, to name only a few. It's also important to remember that not all your questions will have ready answers. Sometimes you must learn by doing, and then learn even better by trying it another way.

Keeping in mind there has never been a loss precisely like yours, there are still some general guidelines bereaved people have found helpful through the years. Above all else, remember that others, *many* others, have faced something similar to what you're facing right now. They have learned what it is like to endure and to survive and often even to grow through their experience. What they have learned is what you can learn, too. The ways they have persevered are ways you can

adopt as well.

Most of all, I hope you'll choose to believe this: your holidays can still be a significant time for you. They will be different, but they can still be meaningful. They may hurt, but they can also hold hope -- even great hope.

Try to: Accept the likelihood of your pain, Feel whatever it is you feel, and Take charge where you can.

In general, choose life in all the ways you can. Be among people who offer you vitality. Practice those disciplines that bring you energy. Do those things that give you satisfaction. Take charge in little ways and you'll find they're not so little -- they're important.

Reprinted with permission and adapted with excerpts from the writings of Jim Miller, author of *What Will Help Me: 12 Things to Remember When You Have Suffered a Loss*, and *How Can I Help?* [belovedhearts.com](http://belovedhearts.com)



## The Story Behind the sudSSpirit Logo by Dominic Murgido

I have been asked many times about the sudSSpirit logo; the cross with a peace dove and a gardenia flower at the base of the cross with the acronym sudSSpirit across the middle of the cross. The acronym stands for

**S**udden  
**U**nexpected  
**D**eath of a  
**S**pouse  
**S**urvivors in  
**P**articipation to  
**I**nform,  
**R**enew,  
**I**mprove, and  
**T**riumph



The cross is another story.

I was never one for wearing any kind of chain or necklace so when I received a silver chain with a sterling silver cross with a peace dove in the center of it one Christmas in the 70's, I wasn't sure how to react. It was nice and it was appreciated and it was from my soon to be wife. I did wear it occasionally but most times it remained in the box it came in.

When I started traveling for work and went places that took me away from her for a few days or a week at a time, the necklace came with me and I wore it to feel closer to my wife and that worked for me. I started to become accustomed to it.

Wearing that necklace now *all the time* works for me. It is now a permanent part of my being and a way to always have the memory of her with me against my chest close to my heart.

The gardenia flower was one of her favorites and I bought one for her from a street vendor in San Francisco during a weekend getaway after taking a ride on a cable car. We had a wonderful time in CA being our first time there and had the dream to return there again for another adventure, but that was not to be. I am so grateful that we took the time to travel there and many other places during our life together.

I miss my wife, Sue, and I know that she is around me in spirit being proud that I took her passing and turned it into positive energy to create a bereavement support group to help

others cope with their grief journey.

A favorite flower plus a Christmas present from the distant past and an acronym became the reality of what represents sudSSpirit today -- five chapters of dedicated volunteers helping others on their grief journey to move forward with their lives while feeling validated about their feelings. *Together We Can Help Each Other Heal*.

Reprinted from a previous edition of this newsletter: Fall 2011

### An Entry From My Journal

"I came across some greeting cards today that I received from friends and family and remember how I felt when I opened them. I wonder if most people realize how helpful and meaningful it is to receive a card in the mail from someone. It could very well be the only thing that makes them smile that day"

-Editor

