

SUDDEN UNEXPECTED DEATH OF A SPOUSE  
BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP



# sudS Spirit

Quarterly Newsletter

SUMMER 2014



Volume 6, Issue 4

## Welcome *from the Editor*

Thank you for taking the time to pick up this issue and explore what it offers. Please feel free to pass it along to someone else who can benefit from the writings on these pages. You can make someone's day a little bit better by sharing this with them in their time of need. 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 four 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 check that out. You may also contact the editor directly at 717-866-2401 or [sudspirit@gmail.com](mailto:sudspirit@gmail.com).

**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 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.*"

### In this issue:

An article entitled "No Rainbow without a Cloud" is provided while we learn that shared grief can lead to friendship. The editor writes about the meaning behind two "Ifs" and a **sudSSpirit** attendee from our Vermont chapter shares her feelings about writing about her husband. A poem from our

former **sudSSpirit** attendee / facilitator, John Kreiser, about Summer is presented along with another poem entitled "The House is Empty Now". Our editor reflects on how everyday acts can be the influence of our loved ones in "It Might Be You". Our standard offerings are also included; quarterly quote, thoughts to ponder, an entry from my journal, and book review.

We hope that you become a regular subscriber to our quarterly newsletter and it is at no cost to you whether you prefer it by email or through the mail. We also have a brochure about our group that we can send you.

**Any** bereavement support group is there to help you in your time of need as you process the loss of a loved one. We encourage you to seek out and become part of one. Don't give up until you find one that you are comfortable with and you feel that it is helping you cope.

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. [sudspirit@gmail.com](mailto:sudspirit@gmail.com) or 717-866-2401 or Facebook.

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED  
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

Benjamin "Joby" Mast  
Roy G. Berkeley  
Sherman Wright  
George Cline  
Bonnie Firestone  
Randy Gates Sr.

Dominic Murgido - Editor

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## Quarterly Quote

- Editor

*"Each one of us is born for a specific reason and purpose, and each one of us will die when he or she has accomplished whatever was to be accomplished. The in-between depends on our willingness to make the best of every day, of every moment, of every opportunity. The choice is always yours."*

- Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

## Memories of Summer

by John Kresier



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 author*

Together we can help each other heal



Like us on  
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## 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

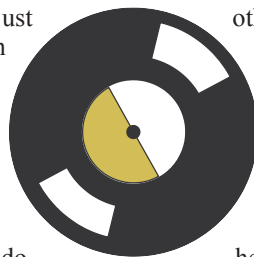


## Two "If's" Make a Right by Dominic Murgido

It was the heart of the 70's and I was just starting college with an intended plan of obtaining a degree and beginning a career. I never imagined going into this adventure that I would not only meet someone to fall in love with but would marry that same person a month after graduation.

I did earn that degree I was intending to do as well as find my wife. *Alvernia University* turned out to be responsible for the beginning of my personal and professional life. To this day and perhaps forever more, the campus of Alvernia holds a special place in my heart. Over the years I have returned many times even from great distances to find comfort and peace and have become involved in a teaching capacity as well as their Alumni activities.

Like many couples, we (my wife Sue and I) had a song. It was "If" by the group *Bread* and in the day we listened to it on a 45 rpm or an album. It was also given plenty of "air time" on the radio when the group was popular with other hits. Our song stayed with us throughout our lives and it was often played randomly at times when we would be together. It was at this time that life would stop for us and we would look into each



other's eyes and reflect, embrace, and kiss. It was tender moments like that which I miss to this day.

My wife's father passed away early on in our marriage when our daughter was still a child. He was a great man with sincerity, kindness, and integrity and held a special place in his heart for his daughter, my wife. Likewise

it can be expressed that Sue held a special place in her heart for her Dad and on one of his birthdays she had his favorite poem hand written in a beautiful script and framed for him.

It was only after his death and her request to have this framed poetry as a remembrance of him and his belief in the poem did I know about this. The poem is called "If" by Rudyard Kipling and it is about a Father's message to his son. It is a beautiful expression of life's moments and how best to handle them. "If" by *Bread* is a beautiful love song expressing the support and love two people can have for one another. Although two different ideas, they shared the same title and were part of our lives together.

"If" the song is still "our song" and one that gives me chills when I hear it on an oldies station or play it with intent from a *Best of Bread* CD I have. "If" the framed poem hangs with warmth in my home and I often stand before it and read it with the same kind of chills.

If only life didn't turn out the way it did, Sue would still have her father, and I would still have Sue. What I do have is representations of two "If's", one hanging on a wall depicting the love between a daughter and her father and one in the format of a song shared by a couple in love many years ago. Both "If's" make a right and will forever be in my heart.

## Shared Grief Leads to Great Friendships

*by Jan Tuckwood*

Kitty Lamb Jackson lived most of her life in Lake Worth, Florida along the Intercoastal. There, she and her husband, Dr. Randy Jackson ( a long time chiropractor ) raised the couple's three daughters. When Randy passed away in 2012, Kitty was grief-stricken. She knew she had to move forward – but where could she find new friends who would understand what she was going through?

Her answer: The Modern Widows Club (modernwidowsclub.com) – a nationwide support-group entity that considers itself "a place to move forward by reaching back". Kitty relocated to Winter Park, to be close to the Orlando hub of Modern Widows Club. In the last two years she has met a tight group of fellow "widow/sister/girlfriends". "The group gave us validation and a connection with other women who get it", Jackson explains. "We're extremely close, and our friendship has helped us get to a stage in our lives where we feel happier and more confident".

*Reprinted with permission: Palm Beach Post, Palm Beach, Florida*

## Thoughts to Ponder

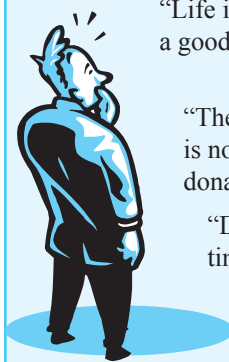
- Editor

"Life is a conversation. Make it a good one." - *Glennon Melton, Huffington Post*

"The measure of life, after all, is not in its duration but its donation." - *Peter Marshall*

"Death is the end of a life-time, not the end of a relationship."

- *Mitch Albom*



## On Paper, From Your Heart by Ellen Perry Berkeley



My dear husband died in 2009. A year later, when a friend suggested that I write about his life, I didn't immediately run with the idea. Then, one morning, I awoke to a wonderful memory, eager to preserve it.

I wasn't doing much else, at the time, except getting chemotherapy for my newly diagnosed Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. (My cure was soon called "amazing, beyond all expectations.") A good attitude must have been part of my cure – as it can be with any cure – because even though exhausted, I was spending an hour or two almost daily, with great pleasure, digging into my heart and writing about Roy.

I wrote about our 43 years together, of course. But I also wrote about his years before we met, and always about what made him so interesting, so strong, so loving. In different segments, I wrote about his upbringing, his education, his various careers, his accomplishments, his passions, his jokes -- even his flaws, which were few, and his illnesses, which were many. (He was mostly in good health, but the first of his seven cancers was when he was 24.)

This was a wonderful project for me. I was focusing on his life, as I knew it and shared it, not on my loss. I was able to keep him with me a bit longer, and that was lovely. When I put the 53 pages into brightly colored folders for friends and family, they were able to hold him a bit closer, and that was lovely too.

I've suggested this project to many grieving spouses. "Ah, but you're a professional writer," they say. True, I've worked on magazine staffs; then, as a freelancer, I've had five books and many articles published. I've also taught writing -- courses on architectural criticism for architecture students, and workshops on memoir-writing for folks long out of school. My students, therefore, have been mostly non-writers. "You can write," I always say; "if you can think, if you can speak, you can write." (If you've had a stroke and can't speak, you can still write, I've been told.)

As you imagine putting your stories on paper, you might simply want them in chronological order. That's fine. But you don't want to omit any important details, so I suggest using 3x5 cards (putting only one item on each card), first spreading your 3x5 cards out, on a table or desk, then gathering them up to produce an "outline" of sorts. It's an outline appropriate to your material – and that's reassuring. It's also an outline easy to revise, and that's stress-reducing, too.

The writing itself is best started when nothing else intrudes on you. Find a quiet time, perhaps

several times a week, and connect deeply with your thoughts. Pour it all out first; you'll patch it up later. Editing, in fact, is a crucial part of writing. With your many changes, large and small, you'll be building a polished product that's as good as you can possibly make it -- as accessible, as understandable, as inviting, as accurate, as crisp.

Nobody sees your writing until you're ready to show it to them. And whatever you'd rather not tell can be dropped at any point. Some people surely learned new things about Roy. (No, I didn't tell any secrets, just included a few details he hadn't mentioned widely.)

Perhaps your writing is only for yourself. This, too, can be very rewarding. Writing is a way to discover what we really think.

From my own experience, I can report that this writing project of mine was as comforting to me as the early attempts at closure were, soon after Roy died.

In "Roy Gellen Berkeley: His Life," I remembered Roy well and I honored him well. I hadn't expected it, but he comforted me well. On those pages, as in so many other ways, he will always be with me.

May you enjoy the same rich experience in your own writing about a loved one.

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



### Book Review - Editor

## Simple Acts of Moving Forward

by Vinita Hampton Wright

Moving forward is a common phrase and one that I have used countless times in my writings. In *Simple Acts of Moving Forward*, The author's version of moving forward tackles many obstacles and how to become "unstuck" from them. The book is divided into sections of "acts" such as acts of daring and acts of healing and joy. Being kind to yourself and others is emphasized taking one step at a time. A quick read that provides some suggestions to you to build upon the life you have.

### sudSSpirit

Bereavement Support Group  
currently meets monthly in  
**four** 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 7PM  
Fishing Creek  
Salem U.M. Church

**York Chapter**,  
Dover, PA.  
3<sup>rd</sup> Thurs. of the month 7PM  
St. David's E.C. Church

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

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

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

- Reading, PA

[lmurray2@comcast.net](mailto:lmurray2@comcast.net)

- Etters, PA

[yorksudsspirit@gmail.com](mailto:yorksudsspirit@gmail.com)

- Dover, PA

[sudsspirit.vt@gmail.com](mailto:sudsspirit.vt@gmail.com)

- Bennington, VT

or phone:

717-866-2401 - Reading, PA

717-938-1928 (ext 241)  
- Etters, PA

717-764-0033 - Dover, PA

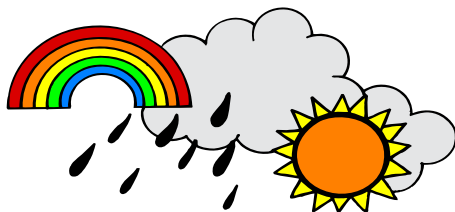
802-441-5562  
- Bennington, VT

- Editor



# There can be no Rainbow without a Cloud and a Storm

Which is easier? Sudden Death vs. the Expected...It is pointless to compare suffering. Who would want to weigh pain on a scale to see whose loss is "greater"? Indeed there can be no scale, no form of measurement to compare each person's experience of grief at the death of a loved one. Yet the circumstances of the death can pose specific problems depending upon the manner in which death occurred. When death comes without warning, the shock is overwhelming. The first wave of shock is physical; we feel nauseous, shaky, and cold. That first blow is crushing, like being hit with a massive weight to the chest. You fight the truth; you cling to unsupported bits of encouragement. When evidence verifies the awful reality you may give into uncontrollable sobbing.



There is so much unfinished business, unresolved issues, and unsaid good-byes. You face the future and the past with equal anxiety. All those loose ends will never be tied, the vast future ahead with its frightening, uncharted waters to travel alone. Each succeeding day, the reality of the death gives you the time to ponder what happened, what will happen next. The initial shock lessens and grief commences. Some say that when death is instant the journey of grief may be prolonged.

If your loved one has died due to a lingering illness or injury, your grief may be complicated by emotional and physical exhaustion. Time spent at the sickbed may have drained you of your own health and energy. Seeing your loved one in pain is a terrible burden to bear. You may have already begun to grieve once the death was declared inevitable, although often a glimmer of hope remains. When your loved one finally does die you may feel a measure of relief. You did not wish their life to end, you wished for their pain to end. Guilt over this relief is common, but once again edged out by the other facets of grief. We cling to memories of better days; we focus there instead of on the final ordeal.

Regardless of which way your loved one dies, it may be helpful for you to sort out your feelings by having a "conversation"

with your loved one. Ask forgiveness, pray to them for help and guidance. You'll feel their presence, and imagining what they would say to you can give you a sense of peace. Your loved one wants you to be happy, they would want you to make peace with yourself.

*Reprinted with Permission: Hope For Bereaved Understanding, Coping and Growing Through Grief, 2007 Syracuse, NY*

## It Might Be You

by Dominic Murgido

I smile at the sunshine, I enjoy a long walk, and I have fun with the dog...

**It might be you.**

I laugh at a joke, I read a great novel, and I feel good today...

**It might be you.**

I listen to music, I hum in the shower, and I sit on the deck...

**It might be you.**

I watch a good movie, I write my thoughts, and I enjoy the smell of the rain...

**It might be you.**

I take a ride in the country, I drink coffee, and I read the Sunday newspaper...

**It might be you.**

I have dinner with a friend, I walk in the park, I meditate at the lake..

**It might be you.**

I work on a project, I address a card, I help another...

**It might be you.**

I take a nap, I go to the mall, and I talk to our daughter...

**It might be you.**

All I do and All I am are influenced by you. I feel you with me day and night. I know you are guiding me, encouraging me, and loving me as I continue on without you.

I have learned to live with the loss of you, I think of you daily, I will never forget you...

**It might be you.**



## The House is Empty Now

By Reverend William E. Gramley

The house is empty now,  
and so am I.

The silence is all around me  
and penetrates my every step.  
If I listen to music, it pierces my soul  
and brings up tears on its way out.

I see her picture on several walls,  
giving a momentary glow  
to days gone by, filling those rooms  
with love's reflections,  
as I pass through.

I go out and return,  
but the routine and the voices  
beyond this place  
cannot come back with me.  
I am stripped and searched at the door,  
humbled as I lean upon  
the entrance way.  
I may only take the emptiness in.

That doesn't seem necessary,  
since it abides here anyway.  
The house is empty now,  
and so am I.

*Reprinted with permission:  
Griefwatch.com*

## An Entry From My Journal

"I have recognized that I had a need to do something even though I wasn't sure why, but then that need allowed me to have a want and then I pursued that. It's all about choices and allowing ourselves to make them."

-Editor

