

SUDDEN UNEXPECTED DEATH OF A SPOUSE
BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP



suds Spirit

Quarterly Newsletter



THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

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Welcome *from the Editor*

Summertime, Summertime, Sum, Sum, Summertime. Another season; another change in life around us. Our newsletter comes out four times a year and is represented by season and we do that intentionally. We know that as seasons change, so does our grief. It can change temporarily or even permanently as we continue on with life without our loved ones. Strive to take on the new day, embrace the season with confidence and courage to move forward with your life.

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, 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*”

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.

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 of a past reading of mine, our Dedication corner, and a poem. But that’s not all. This issue includes an article about “Taking a Bike Ride with a Memory or two” as well as “Coming Home”. We also provide articles relating to your in-laws, and grieving after twenty years.

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.***

Change of Plan

by John Kresier

Sometimes, I just sit and ponder
Focus free, my thoughts do wander
To happier times in the past
When I believed that things would last
Unchanged by time or circumstance
Forever locked in love’s sweet trance
Looking forward to tomorrow
Denying any would be sorrow
Convinced that love could conquer all
Completely sound, no chance to fall
Contented in my mindless bliss
Protected, safe from all of this
A future that once seemed so bright
Now ghastly dark, devoid of light
The secret slate that held life’s plans
Has been erased by unseen hands
Agenda gone without a clue
Unfinished life bereft of you
No longer traveling side by side
No one to love nor to confide
Nor share an unknown destiny
Just empty days ahead for me
Resolved to better understand
This unexpected change of plan
I’m left to journey all alone
Until the good Lord calls me home
Reflecting on your memory
With shadows of what was to be

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Dominic Murgido - Editor

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Quarterly Quote

- Editor

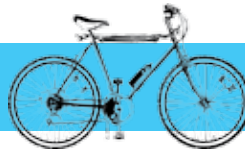
***“The sharing of joy,
whether physical,
emotional, psychic,
or intellectual, forms
a bridge between
the sharers which
can be the basis for
understanding much
of what is not shared
between them, and
lessens the threat of
their difference.”***

- Audre Lord

Together we can help each other heal



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Facebook / sudsspirit***



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



Taking a Bike Ride with a Memory or Two

by *Dominic Murgido*

On a beautiful Sunday afternoon when the weather was too nice not to be outdoors, I decided on a bike ride on a trail near my home. Many others had the same idea as I pulled into the crowded trailhead parking lot. Couples, families, some pets too along to enjoy the sunshine. A mix of walkers and joggers were also present.

Bike rides are different for me now; solo. My wife and I rode our bikes together on many bike trails around the current home we were occupying at the time. When our daughter came along and she was able, she accompanied us. For many years this was a favorite past time sharing the outdoors with the ones you love doing something healthy and fun.

As time passed and my daughter matured, she did not want to be part of the Mom / Dad bike ride so it came down to the two of us and that was ok. Years later with knee trouble, my wife dropped out and then took up kayaking. We would then drive to a lake that also had bike trails and although we did separate healthy and fun things, we enjoyed the drive to and from and then the conversation of how our experience was.

As I biked on this mostly shaded trail today, this is what I was remembering. Our talks, laughs, betting who could get to the next marker first and

seeing who could be less out of breath. Memories like it were just yesterday; happy and fun memories of times passed.

I smiled and said Hello to so many people that were on the trail today. Thinking of the times they were sharing with each other at that moment as a couple or with children whether walking or biking. I also thought of those that were by themselves like me. Men and women alone taking a walk, jog, or bike ride. What's their story? Time alone from their spouse or family; single, divorced, widowed; maybe they were reflecting the same thing I was.

Riding my bike now has a new meaning for me, a good one. I have come so far on my journey and still enjoy riding a bike. It provides a sense of freedom and allows me to think and remember all the good times I shared with my wife and daughter. I am comforted with being on a trail and out among nature feeling content and satisfied. I am so happy for those moments and all the other moments I shared with them. It is so important to spend time with those you love right now. Time is something that when taken away, can never be returned to you. Enjoy your time and create moments with your loved ones.

Life is defined in moments...I am glad that there were these past moments in my life so that I can have fond memories now.



Book Review - Editor

Wife of the Deceased

by *Dawn M. Bell*

The author captures the overwhelming pain, disillusion, anger and hope of one who has lost their soul mate too soon. Beautifully written, it is a heart-wrenching but at the same time an uplifting read of how the human spirit continues on in the face of insurmountable agony.

Honest, heart-felt and powerful. A must read if you have ever questioned your feelings while working through tragedy or grief. A sincere account that can be helpful for managing your own journey or providing support for someone else.

I'd recommend this book to anyone who has been forced to face loss, and to take comfort knowing they are not alone. How wonderful it is to know there are ways to discover strength at the most unlikely of times.

Thoughts to Ponder

- Editor

"In the end, it's not the years in your life that count; it's the life in your years."
-Abraham Lincoln

"If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else."
-Booker T. Washington

"The soul is not where it lives, but where it loves."
- H.G. Bohn





Coming Home to an Empty Place

by Ellen Perry Berkeley

At any time of day –morning, afternoon, evening – are you sometimes uncomfortable returning to your empty house? I am. But it’s happening less frequently for me, and perhaps the same is true for you. Here are my thoughts on this experience that many of us share.

First, some history. When my husband was alive, our house of 38 years never felt empty. If he was home, he was always delighted to welcome me back, eager to hear where I’d been and what I’d done. This was his response even when I was returning from my wonderful Women in Transition group, where we’ve promised never to repeat anything we’ve discussed. “A good meeting?” Roy would ask, smiling. “Yup,” I’d reply, also smiling, while I’d gesture wildly that “my lips are sealed.”

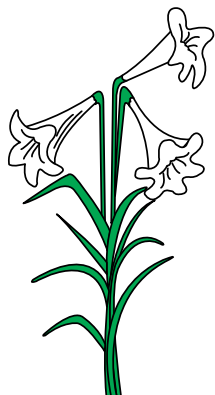
If he wasn’t home, the house didn’t seem empty. He’d soon be home. Things are different now, for all of us who’ve lost a dear partner. If we’re living alone now, this home can seem very empty when we first return from our travels, our errands, our meetings and appointments, our fun. And this is despite my having moved to a home that Roy never knew – an “independent cottage” in a nearby retirement facility.

Am I worried that I’ll be interrupting a break-in? Perhaps a burglar might still be evaluating everything thrown onto the floor, his baseball bat indicating that he’ll stay until he’s damn ready to leave. Or maybe a pair of burglars is weeding through my jewelry drawers for a valuable item among the inexpensive colorful beads purchased long ago – “junk jewelry,” we called it then. Or perhaps the intruders are hunting for a locked safe, hidden within a wall. Roy never wanted such a safe, feeling that its location could be easily revealed by a painting large enough to shield it.

No, it’s not those break-ins that I dread. It’s the sweet welcomings that I miss. His eagerness to share my life. His willingness to hear every detail. His happiness to give me full approval. It’s more. The emptiness of these rooms tells me, with absolutely certainty, that Roy is gone. Perhaps I should go out less often, I’ve thought.

Fewer times coming home. But this seems counter-productive; I’ve spent several years trying to do exactly the opposite.

Nevertheless, several procedures have helped me recently. Maybe they’re silly, maybe not. I leave a light on in the kitchen or elsewhere, suggesting that someone is there, involved in what he’s doing but keen to have my company. I also leave the TV on, suggesting that someone is there, watching quietly but impatient to share the latest hot news. Here’s one more thing. I often greet myself upon returning, with a word that I speak loudly and cheerfully. I say “Well ...” or “So ...” before I hang up my coat or drape my purse over a chair. It’s as if I expect to be involved, momentarily, in a real hug and a real conversation. Oddly, this is comforting.



But does any of this really help? Those first few moments still tell me that Roy isn’t there – and won’t be there.

In another sense, though, he’ll always be there. Reminders of Roy are in every room. And of course he’ll be with me even as I make this new home mine alone.

My days at home are full, as I continue to move into my new life. After putting new mail on the dining table, and new groceries on the shelves or in the fridge, I’m active – reaching out to friends, writing, reading, watching TV, helping others in various ways, and managing the never-ending household chores. Once I’m back home, doing all that I do here, I’m comfortable. But why is this first minute, returning from anywhere and anything, sometimes so uncomfortable? Perhaps I’ll know, at some point. Or perhaps I won’t need to know, because this feeling (I do suspect) won’t be with me forever (I do hope).

An Entry From My Journal

“Music is such an emotional connection for me in so many ways. I listened to a cassette tape I made for Sue with her favorite songs and I smiled all the way through them. Miss you.”

-Editor



sudSSpirit
Bereavement Support
Group
currently meets monthly
in the following locations:

Berks Chapter,
Reading, PA.
4th Wed. of the month 6 PM
Exeter Library

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

Bennington Chapter,
Bennington, VT
4th Tues. of the month 6 PM
Bennington Library

Lebanon Chapter,
Richland, PA
3rd Tues. of the month 6 PM
Richland Library

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

sudsspirit@gmail.com
- Berks, Cumberland,
and Lebanon, PA

sudsspirit.vt@gmail.com
- Bennington, VT

or phone:

717-866-2401
Berks, Lebanon, PA

717-938-1928
- Cumberland, PA

802-441-5562
- Bennington, VT

- Editor





Twenty Years and Still Grieving

by Larry M. Barber

Twenty years! I can't believe that this coming May 2013 will mark the 20th anniversary of the deaths of my 37-year-old wife Cindy and my two-year-old adopted daughter Katie. Twenty years! That's seven years longer than the 13 years Cindy and I were married. I cannot believe that 20 years have passed. And I cannot believe still that they actually died. Along the way the time often has seemed like an eternity. At other times during the grief journey is felt to me like the losses had just taken place. That is the strange, warped time perception that exists in grief.

Have I progressed? Have I healed? Am I where I'm supposed to be in my grief journey? I don't know. Grief has been a part of my life for so long it is almost hard to imagine what it was like before that day – May 15, 1993 – when a multi-car accident in Arlington Texas changed my life and my family so drastically. Sometimes I wonder if grief hasn't become too familiar to me.

Things continue to change drastically in my life and for my family but at a much slower pace now. My children, Christian and Sarah, are mature adults living lives successfully on their own. That's as it should be. I am proud of them and what they have become. I am now a grief counselor and minister, two professions that I probably never would've chosen had the accident and the deaths not occurred. Well-wishers and encouragers have told me that I am so blessed that God has made it possible for me to have a ministry to those struggling in grief. I am blessed, and I thank God for my blessings every day. But deep in my heart I know that I would gladly trade this ministry to have my wife Cindy and my daughter Katie back with me physically.

Just like every other mourner I have to learn to accept the reality of the deaths and my losses that my soul and my heart continually cry out in denial and protest over...even after 20 years. I have accepted my new reality, but I still don't have to like it. Does that make me pathological in my grief? Does that mean I am abnormal and suffering with complications that need to professional help? I don't think so, but sometimes when I'm very tired and had enough of the grief, I wonder.

Grief is the overwhelming love for a person no longer physically present. Mourning in healthy ways after the deaths of loved ones honors their valuable lives. I never want to stop remembering, honoring and loving my wife Cindy and my daughter Katie. Therefore the overwhelming love in my heart for them even in their absence must be expressed. That overwhelming love comes out in my continuing grief.

Twenty years this May. This anniversary is a milestone I would much rather forget. But it is a milestone that helps to remind me of how far my family and I have come. This twentieth anniversary is also a milestone that helps me to remember, to honor and to mourn the loss of two valuable people. Please believe me that as much as I hate my grief journey, I know that my grief and my life well lived are the best monuments I can build to my wife and daughter.

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Relating With In-Laws After A Spouses Death

By Janet McGinn

While attending a widowed grief group, a discussion began about the association of surviving spouses and their in-laws. As I listened, I became absorbed with the emotions expressed in the room and thought of a proverb to describe what was happening, "He that pities another remembers himself." When I left that night, I couldn't stop thinking about the grief group and began to hypothesize these questions: Does the family relationship prior to death affect the kinship after death? How does the type of death, ie. natural VS suicide, terminal illness VS sudden tragedy; alter the closeness with grieving in-laws? What would cause relationships to change over time?

Not finding anything on this topic in the grief books at hand, I will share the concerns of members from that meeting. I will describe four possible in-law scenarios. (Do any of these describe your situation?)

1) The in-laws continue to remain an extended family, supportive and needing you in a long-term kinship. This is especially true if the in-laws are biological grandparents. A mutual respect between the families allows positive interactions that are reciprocated. It is favorable for some families to remain in close contact, accepting the surviving spouse and offspring as loved ones, as if death had not occurred. (After four years, this is where I am.)

2) The in-laws would rather not remain in close contact, but you find yourself wanting to hang onto a relationship with them. One explanation for their reluctance could be you are a constant reminder of their beloved. In some cases after a sudden death, the denial of the death by in-laws is a survival reaction enacted without meaning to hurt you. It is possible that you will experience feelings of abandonment. (This happened to me during the funeral week.) Remember, "Time heals all wounds" and perhaps being patient with them will allow them to miss your friendship.

3) Your in-laws need you to be a sounding board, but you wish they didn't want to stay so close. "One cliché is that "Misery loves company." To that I would add my thoughts, 'like grief needs companionship.' One member, whose wife was an only child, befriended his mother-in-law because he knew she saw him as the last link to her beloved daughter. He explained how listening to his in-law would recreate memories that served as emotional triggers, surfacing at a time he was not prepared to grieve. As in the widower's case, contact with your in-laws may even cause some depression, although originally well intended expressions of their grief may now prevent you from moving on. Other special circumstances could arise if your spouse was an only child, died from a lingering illness or had a parent who was already widowed.

4) In-laws break their bond with the surviving spouse if the couple is childless or the children are grown. Such was the case for one widower without offspring, who described how the in-laws severed all ties and simply disappeared out of his life, perhaps blaming him for the spouse's suicide. Thus, the grieving spouse had lost everything connected to his beloved wife at a time when he needed to feel close to those who loved her, too. In conclusion, depending on your given situation, only you can decide if your relationship with in-laws is a BLESSING OR A BURDEN? However, you have the right to decide how you want to deal with them, whether you remain in touch or alter your current relationship. From a widowed grief group I saw first-hand how "A handful of common sense is worth a bushel of learning."

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