

## Welcome *from the Editor*

The New Year begins and so many of us are looking for a fresh start in life. Some of us begin this year for the first time alone, for others it has been many years now that we usher in a new year without our spouse. On a personal level, this is year number five for me being without my wife. I have made progress in my journey but there are still times it feels like it just happened.

The **sudSSpirit** Quarterly Newsletter is a companion to the bereavement support group of the same name that meets monthly in Reading, PA and Etters, PA. **sudSSpirit** stands for “*Sudden Unexpected Death of a Spouse – Survivors in Participation to Inform, Renew, Improve, and Triumph*” It was founded in 2008 to help provide a place of comfort, compassion, and hope for those that have experienced a sudden unexpected death or their spouse or significant other. It is the editor’s intention to start a third chapter in the new year in the Bennington, VT area.

In this issue, please note a new resource has been added (Diakon Family Life Services). Linda Tippett shares her thoughts in *The Invisible Cloak* while a poem is presented by Sherry Harvey. An article on how to get back on track after the loss of a loved one is also provided. The editor reflects while sitting at the fireplace and shares thoughts to ponder, an entry from my journal, a book review, quarterly quote, and resources.

## Lonely at the Fireplace

*By Dominic Murgido*

It had to be one of the best things we loved to share with one another, enjoy a nice fire in the fireplace in our home. We would spend the afternoon or evenings watching the flames dance on the seasoned oak logs.

Sprinkle some potpourri on the logs to bring out a beautiful scent or a treated pine cone to bring out bright colors. At times we would make popcorn, grilled cheese sandwiches, or even hot dogs over the fire. Toasting marshmallows was always an option as the fire died down and allowed us to create and enjoy a s’more or two.

I wanted to build a fire today in the fireplace and I did. I wanted to make a connection with her. I needed to be close to her today and this is the way I thought about how to do it. On the mantle are pictures of her and around the room, some of her many cross stitch accomplishments that she took such pride in creating. Books adorn the book shelves that were once read by her or acquired by her that she never got an opportunity to read. Trinkets

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**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.

I would like to encourage all readers of this newsletter to make comment on what you read or make a suggestion as to what you would like to know more about. If there is a resource you have been trying to find, please ask us to help. Please email [sudsspirit@gmail.com](mailto:sudsspirit@gmail.com). **sudSSpirit** is here to help you throughout your grief journey and our meetings will never end. Our structure is designed to provide continuous monthly meetings. We want to be there for you to provide the support and validation that you need to move forward with your life.

If you would like a brochure with more information about our Reading, PA group, please call 484-336-5097. Email [kaizan2@gmail.com](mailto:kaizan2@gmail.com) If you would like a brochure with more information about our Etters, PA group, please call 717-938-1928 ( ext 241) Email [lmurry2@comcast.net](mailto:lmurry2@comcast.net). You can also email the editor at [sudsspirit@gmail.com](mailto:sudsspirit@gmail.com).

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## Quarterly Quote

*- Editor*

*“When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.”*

*-Kayhill Gibran*

## Resources

- Editor

MHARBC (Mental Health Assn of Reading and Berks County)  
www.mharbc.org 610-775-3000

Berks Counseling Center  
www.berksc.org 610-373-4281

Caron Counseling Services  
1-800-678-2332

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

St Joseph's Spiritual Care  
www.thefutureofhealthcare.org  
610-378-2297

Reading Hospital  
www.readinghospital.org  
610-988-8070

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

Pinnacle Health Hospice  
800-222-5236

Circle of Life Coalition  
www.circleoflifecoalition.org  
610-372-3638

www.griefshare.org

Diakon Family Life Services  
www.diakon.org/fls/NPLoss.asp  
610-682-1337



## Lonely at the Fireplace *(continued from page 1)*

and items are present that represent places we've been or times we had together. So many stories can be shared by looking at the various mementos – so many memories.

Sitting at the fireplace together was a highlight for us as a couple. We would share dreams, hopes, and plans for our future while listening to a favorite CD. Sometimes, we would sit silent in each other's arms and both content with each other's company just as it was.

So the fire continues to burn and I sit here alone being part of a ritual once carried out by two people in love. I am glad I built a fire today and had some moments of reflection. I do feel that she is with me in a spiritual way and even though it is *lonely at the fireplace*, I feel warmth in my heart from her.



## Excerpts from:

### *Life After Death: How to get back on track following the loss of a loved one* By Tamara E. Holmes with Liana Polyak

WHILE HER PEERS WERE STARTING families and charting their careers, 29-year-old Nepherterra Estrada was planning her husband's funeral.

"After I lost him, I initially thought my life was over," says the young widow about the months following her husband Martin's sudden and untimely death at the age of 36. "I was paralyzed emotionally and I thought I was ruined financially, because he was the breadwinner in our household."

The loss of a spouse, family member, or close friend not only leaves an emotional scar on surviving loved ones, it can also be financially and professionally devastating. Survivors who are overwhelmed with grief may feel unable to get out of bed, go to work, or pay the bills and often feel as though their lives are over too, says Dr. Gloria Morrow, a licensed clinical psychologist in Upland, California, and author of the educational DVD *Suffer in Silence No More* (Shining Glory Publications; \$19.95). But such thinking is dangerous. "You can't give up because he or she is no longer here," Morrow says. "You must develop a realistic picture of your situation and take care of your affairs." ...

For Estrada, now 31, the loss of her husband

could not have come at a worse time. She had recently co-founded a public relations firm in Milwaukee, Mosaic Communications Inc., and needed to attend to it. Since her husband had managed the couple's day-to-day finances, she admits she didn't know as much about their financial situation as she should have. "I knew my company's budget inside and out. But as far as my personal finances, I was just kind of along for the ride." ...

It's not uncommon for survivors to feel incapable of doing tasks that they once relied on their loved ones to do, says Morrow, but learning how to do these tasks often supports the healing process ...

While survivors may feel overwhelmed, they must come up with a plan long before their grief recedes.

"Acknowledge the pain and give yourself permission to grieve. However, you must get up and tend to your new reality, says Morrow. "Other things are still important."

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## Lonely Tears

By Sherry Harvey

These lonely tears fall from  
my eyes,  
Everyday since you have  
been gone.  
Why oh Why, did you have  
to die?  
It just seems so very wrong.  
I know the Lord sent you  
to me.  
You have changed my life  
for the good.  
I just miss you so much  
you see.  
Like you knew I would.  
I miss your loving touch,  
The talks we had,  
I miss your smile and the  
hugs so much.  
I am so very sad.  
I imagine the terrible pain  
you must have had,  
The day the truck hit  
our car.  
The accident, it was bad.  
It took you away so far.  
Our love was strong for  
each other,  
The best relationship that  
could ever be.  
There will never be another,  
You were the man for me.  
It will be no more,  
Just memories in my heart,  
It will be no more,  
Now that we are apart.  
These lonely tears fall from  
my eyes,  
Every day since you have  
been gone.  
Why, oh why, did you  
have to die?  
It just seems so very wrong.

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## The Invisible Cloak *By Linda Tippett*

I didn't expect it. Not now. Not when I had rationally and intellectually told myself over and over that my real grieving had taken place when I knew he would not get better. Wasn't that when my actual journey of widowhood had begun – before death, when I began losing my companion little by little? And hadn't God answered my prayers and taken him gently and quickly, surrounded by family love?

So why, after rather proudly keeping my emotional equilibrium for several months, did I suddenly burst into tears upon entering the hospital where he and I had spent so much time? I was going to visit a friend, but I never even made it to the elevators. I stumbled back to the car to sit in shaken wonder that such emotion had suddenly bubbled out.

Apparently grief can sometimes be like an invisible cloak that you may unwittingly wear. It can cover from head to toe, keeping emotion hidden in its folds. Nor can anyone else see it. I heard over and over again, "My, you seem to be doing so well!" And I began to believe it as my unconscious act of normalcy fooled everyone, even me.

Then that day my cloak fell open. Its lurking emotions finally burst through to envelop me with feelings so intense that I literally felt raw inside. My outpouring of tears lasted well beyond the meager supply of tissues I had in my purse. More than one passerby looked my way, but left me to my obvious grief.

Finally my sobs subsided into hiccups, and I began the process of practicality...starting the car, finding my way out of the parking garage, paying the tickets, and then driving home through rainy streets to my empty house.

Strangely the house had never seemed emptier, starting the cycle of tears again, until all I could do was lie down on my much-too-big bed and soak the pillowcase through.

Underlying all this outburst was still the element of surprise. I was sure I hadn't cloaked my grief. Because concerned family and friends thought I should, I had read booklets on the grief process and had even attended a grief support group several times. But all the time I thought..." I don't need this. I'm fine. Sure, I'm lonely, but I'm handling it."

I suspect now that any grief counselor would recognize this as a classic case of unwitting grief denial and wouldn't have been at all surprised at my experience.

Afterwards, when I was calmer, I returned to the literature I had shoved back on a shelf, and read again the wise words that now held a great deal more meaning for me.

"Grief is painful. Grief is unpredictable. Grief involves surprises. The way out of grief is through it."

*Continued on page 4*

*Berks Chapter  
meets monthly on  
the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday at  
6:15 pm at Exeter  
Community Library,  
Reading, PA.  
For information  
call 484-336-5097  
or Email  
kaizan2@gmail.com.*



*Cumberland / York  
Chapter meets  
monthly on the  
2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday at  
7 pm at Fishing  
Creek Salem United  
Methodist Church,  
Etters, PA.  
For information  
call 717-938-1928  
( ext 241) or Email  
lmurry2@comcast.net*



## Book Review - Editor

### When Your Spouse Dies

by Mildred Tengbom

From the Hope and Healing series, Tengbom condenses the stages of grief into three phases. Her phases include Shock, Disorganization, and Reconstruction. She also comments on the memorial service as well as coping skills. The author offers comfort and hope for what is yet to be. This book is a quick read in a smaller format but it is packed with information that validates many of the feelings that we all have shared at one time.

For additional information, please refer to [www.augsburg-fortress.org](http://www.augsburg-fortress.org)

## Thoughts to Ponder - Editor

“After winter comes the summer. After night comes the dawn. And after every storm, there comes clear, open skies.”

-Samuel Rutherford

“ [To] take the first step in faith, you don't have to see the whole staircase; just take the first step.”

-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

“There will come a time when you believe everything is finished...that will be the beginning.” -Louis L'Amour



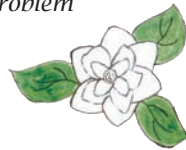
## Our Mission

*sudSpirit* wants to provide you with a supplemental group experience in addition to professional therapy and/or counseling sessions that are currently happening in the lives of those interested.

*sudSpirit* does not take the place of professional guidance and we encourage you to seek therapy as required.

*sudSpirit* wants to provide a comfortable setting with a sense of community among those in attendance. People should feel free to communicate and share feelings as it pertains to their journey through the grieving process.

*sudSpirit* wants those in attendance to realize that they are not alone with this problem and the group is available to provide infinite support.



## An Entry From My Journal

“I feel alone at times early in the morning when I awaken for it is only me in this bedroom to greet the day and no casual conversation with anyone as the day begins.”

-Editor



## Links - Editor

[www.groww.org](http://www.groww.org) (on line grief recovery with helpful information)

[www.griefshare.org](http://www.griefshare.org) (a nationwide grief support group network with local ties to meetings)

[www.memory-of.com](http://www.memory-of.com) (a way to celebrate your loved one's life and legacy)

[www.healthboards.com](http://www.healthboards.com) (a place to ask questions, review boards of topics being discussed to gain on line support)

[www.memorybearsinc.com](http://www.memorybearsinc.com) (a unique way to remember your loved one or anything)

## The Invisible Cloak

(continued from page 3)

All this advice I had first skimmed over with a “yeah, yeah, yeah” attitude. Convinced that I had absorbed my loss in a dignified and admirable way, I had dismissed the wisdom of experts.

But with the sudden lifting of my invisible cloak, I had finally experienced the gritty pain of grief, but thought I must find a way around it. However, to get to the other side of it, I had to walk through the door that opens on acceptance of a new path. I had hidden grief from myself, wrapping the pain so tightly as to squeeze the life from it, trying to bypass that door.

Yes, it was unpredictable and surprising, but now I know it's inevitable. It's just a matter of when. Sooner or later I will have to gird myself for the roller coaster ride that often characterizes the healthy grief process.

I didn't understand that it is normal to fall apart even months after the funeral, or find Christmas, birthdays, anniversaries, or just “a year ago today” passages difficult. I was convinced that keeping it all cloaked was the “brave” thing to do. It was certainly easier on family and friends.

But I learned that this is MY grief and how I handle it has nothing to do with anyone else. Many people do not give others the freedom to grieve in a way that is right for them, but I am unique. My situation and lost relationship are unique, and I must surrender to the process in my own way.

There's an ancient “Warrior Song” that says, “There is meaning only in the struggle. Triumph or defeat is in the hands of God. So let us continue the struggle”. It's a mandate, indeed, as I now know what battles need to be fought to light up my forward path and throw off the invisible cloak.

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[www.webhealing.com](http://www.webhealing.com)