



WINTER 2017

Volume 9, Issue 2

Welcome *from the Editor*

Happy New Year!

Thank you for picking up this issue of our Quarterly Newsletter, our first for 2017. We still provide hard copies when most others have abandoned that idea. We also can email you this newsletter as an attachment should you want that. Details on how to request that are below.

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, 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 “The Art of Losing” and “Good Grief”. Ken

Penrose talks about his wife Marj and the editor reflects about another New Year.

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.***

Angel of my Dreams

by John Kresier

She visited my dreams last night
I begged for her to stay
We laughed and talked like nothing's
wrong
But then she went away
I didn't have to search for her
She showed up willingly
And even though it was a dream
It meant the world to me
So often I have longed for her
With aching in my heart
I never seem to comprehend
The reason we're apart
Then on some rare occasion when
I'm in my deepest slumber
A mystical connection will
Unite us unencumbered
By all that had transpired
Within the life we shared
And once again, we two are one
Our laughter fills the air
My mind is full of memories
These thoughts will last forever
Of days gone by, when she and I
Spent countless hours together
When you have someone in your life
That means the world to you
You think that things will always be
But sometimes, that's not true
She visited my dreams last night
I wished for her to stay
I'm thankful for the time we had
Before she went away

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Dominic Murgido - Editor

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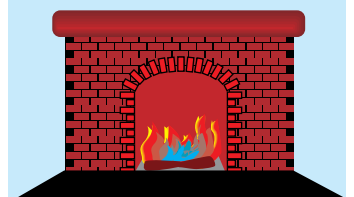
My Wife, Marg

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 Hammarskjold



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



Another New Year is Here

by *Dominic Murgido*

The passage of time is marked in so many ways for us; Birthdays, Anniversaries, Seasons, Holidays, and New Year's Day.

As time passes, we realize that life changes and we move forward one step at a time. For those of us that have lost a loved one, time is an important aspect and significant mark for us.

The New Year signifies a "start over" for so many or even a means of measurement of our progress on our journey of grief. We struggle with looking back at the past year or past years without them knowing that life was different for us and will now continue to be different for us as the New Year begins.

For some, the New Year will be the first year that you will begin without them and the pain and emotions that you are feeling are still very much raw with sadness. You can't even begin to separate yourself from the facts of what happened or yourself from once being part of a couple with the spouse or significant other you loved. This is ok and is a normal feeling that you are experiencing. Please know that as each New Year rolls along, things will improve for you.

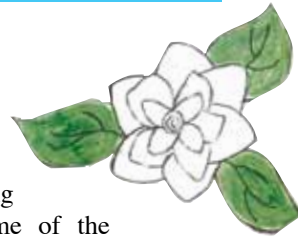
For others, this New Year marks another one of many that have passed without our loved ones and in some ways the feelings that we are experiencing have changed. We tend

to feel a sense of separation from the loss that has occurred. Distance is becoming more prevalent from the time of the loss. And that is ok and a normal feeling. We are learning to move forward with positive insight and the New Year marks achievement and progress in our journey. This is a time to realize that you are in the healing process and it is becoming clearer to you that your path of life is becoming your new normal.

You will forever cherish the memories of your loved one and will not forget the impact that they have had on your being, but you will become stronger in identifying the person you have now become and will not feel guilty or inappropriate about enjoying life all over again.

Every New Year allows us an opportunity to look forward, to begin again, to settle old ways of life and start new, to learn from the past, and to reflect on where life can take us in the future. Those of us that are survivors of the death of a spouse or significant other are no different than anyone else greeting the New Year. We all have the same opportunity to change our attitude, look ahead, and own the life we now have and make it the best that it could be.

I wish all of you a Happy New Year filled with comfort and peace.



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, wound more deeply."

-Seneca



Book Review - Editor

With Those Who Grieve

by *Kay Soder-Alderfer*

A collection of stories from people whom have survived the grief process awaits you 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. The telling of their stories is the healing for all of them and all of us as we proceed through this bereavement process.

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



“GOOD GRIEF!”

by *Ellen Perry Berkeley*

We’ve often heard the expression “Good Grief!” (In print, it always needs an exclamation point.) These words usually explode in a quick exhale – an immediate and clear comment on what hasn’t gone well.

Yet there’s something called “good grief” (about grieving, of course). There’s even a book, which I haven’t read, with this exact title. And although we’re told to grieve however we need to, we’re told that some ways are a “good grief” and some ways aren’t.

As I approach our 50th anniversary, and recall our 43 years together – supporting and building each other, enjoying and cherishing each other – I know that Roy and I had a good marriage. We were always protecting each other, always there for each other, and always resolving any differences with careful conversations, never with fierce arguments. In addition, possibly a lesser matter, we weren’t just constantly “in touch” but were constantly touching each other, sometimes simply when getting up from the dining table for something in the fridge.

I know, too, that Roy had a good life, though only 73 when he died.

He also had a good death, hospitalized and heavily sedated for two weeks, but often smiling. His death wasn’t sudden or unexpected. Two months earlier, we learned that his salivary-gland cancer – cured, we thought – had gone to his bones.

(Parenthetically, a loved one’s death may always come as a jolt. I’ve come to think that all of us who have suffered the loss of a spouse can understand “sudSSpirit.” We’ve all been there.)

And I had a “good grief.” Now that I’m into a life far less overwhelming than those early days of grieving, I can think quietly about what I consider my good grieving.

1. I’ve felt no guilt that I was absent when Roy breathed his last. I’d been at his bedside all day, almost too exhausted for the 20-minute drive home. I didn’t feel up to returning to his bedside, and this apparently surprised the aide who called me later that night with the news. But I’d already said many loving goodbyes to Roy.
2. I’ve felt only relief (and no guilt about this, either) that Roy died before his situation got much worse.
3. A year after he died, I wrote a lengthy biography of him. This comforted me hugely, keeping him with me a bit longer, during the writing, then pleasing the many people who received a copy

from me. Without exception, everyone has treasured my thoughts about what made Roy so special.

4. With friends, I’ve revisited some of the places we had loved, enjoying outings so pleasant that I spent no time being sad. I’ll never forget our own lovely getaways, but I can almost hear Roy urging me to enjoy my new life.

5. I’ve made new friends. While my dearest companion is gone, he’d be the first person to want me to have good people in this new life of mine.

6. I’ve never denied the pain I’ve felt, despite some folks urging me, in effect, to “get over it.” I’ve come to understand that a good grief must be acknowledged and fully felt, not choked down and stifled.

7. I’ve never been in denial about death. When I think about my own inevitable departure, I am calm. If I’m in a difficult decline, at that future time, I’ll miss Roy’s presence – his everyday assistance, his comfort, his help in any decision-making. Or perhaps I’ll die suddenly. Either way, I’m glad he won’t be here to suffer.



Altogether, I think I’ve been experiencing a good grief. Reaching this 50th anniversary without Roy, I’ll surely miss him, even as I tell myself, as I often do, “That was then, this is now.” Smiling as I say this, and accepting what must be accepted, I may be experiencing one more part of a “good grief.”

But “Good Grief!” I’ve gone on quite enough. Take stock, yourselves, of your own grieving – what has made it good, and what might make it even better.

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



sudSSpirit
Bereavement Support Group
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

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

sudsspirit@gmail.com
- Berks and Cumberland
Pennsylvania

sudsspirit.vt@gmail.com
- Bennington, VT

or phone:
717-866-2401
- Berks and Cumberland
Pennsylvania

802-441-5562
- Bennington, VT

- Editor



The Art of Losing by Deborah Morris Coryell

In our culture the worst thing you can say about someone is that he is a “loser.” But aren’t we all losers? Isn’t life about chronic loss? The process of life is about endings and beginnings. We are losing all the time. As a matter of fact, we begin our earthly existence by “losing” time, moment by moment. We usually don’t think in these terms, but perhaps we should.

We breathe in, a beginning; we breathe out, an ending. Life is all about letting go. If we can’t “let go” well, then we can’t live well. It’s all in how we see what we see: We can choose to see it as morbid (defined as having to do with disease), or we can choose to see it as the rhythm of life. By holding on too tightly, we become disconnected from the rhythmic ebb and flow of the world around us. We turn night into day with the flip of a switch and seek to defeat forces of decay and destruction. Loss becomes an affront: This “shouldn’t” have happened.

It is our decision as to how we live “the losing” in each moment. Possessions are lost or broken or otherwise disappear. People and relationships change, move on, or die. Pets grow old as we do. Places we loved once are no longer what they were to us. Dreams we once had we might never accomplish, or we might change our minds about our desire to realize them.

The ability to “change our mind” is a powerful skill and one we need to spend a great deal of time with in the face of loss. The power to “change our mind” lies in our ability to think about something differently, to think about what loss is and what it means to be a loser. There is an art to living, yes? There is an art to dying, we believe. What about an art to losing, to grieving? We are told, as children, not to be “sore losers” but did anyone teach us how to be “good losers”?

Take a deep breath. Reflect on this for a moment. Losing well is freedom — freedom from the pain and confusion and fear attached to loss. We are as surely attached to our pain and fear and confusion around loss as we once were attached to that which we feel we’ve lost. Perhaps we have substituted our attachment one for the other: the pain for the love. Breathe into the emptiness, breathe into the pain created by loss. Stay for a moment. We love. We give our love to someone or something or someplace. We are attached through that love. And suddenly (or slowly) that object is gone from our sight. Where do we put the love then? We have this love with no place to put it. Grief becomes our experience of not having our love received, of not having anywhere to put our love.

Healing our grief means continuing to love in the face of loss. The face of loss — what we see — is that someone or something is gone. The heart of loss teaches us that nothing — no thing — we have ever known can be lost. What we have known we have taken into ourselves in such a way that it has become part of the very fabric of our being. It is part of who we are, and as long as we are alive we have the capacity to continue to love even that which is no longer a part of our daily reality. This means that we will need to “change our minds” about many notions that we have had about loss: That what we can no longer “see” is gone. That what we can no longer touch doesn’t continue to live. That if there is no response, the relationship is over.

Close your eyes and see that which you can no longer touch, that which is gone from your presence. Reach inside of you to the feeling of touching, hearing, smelling, being with your experience of what you believed was lost.

Remember.

We are haunted by societal fears that we should not continue

Together we can help each other heal

to stay connected with what is gone, what is past, what has been lost. We are warned that there is a pitfall here, a caveat, symbolized by Dickens’ Miss Havisham: be wary of that part of us that might want to live in the past. The challenge is to bring the past along with us in such a way that we haven’t lost anything.

We don’t ignore the challenge because of the pitfall. Truth to tell, we could not forget our past if we wanted to. What we choose to leave in the past, we can. What we choose to continue loving, we can. We are being asked to give new form to what was contained in an earlier relationship. Our grief becomes the container for what we feel we have lost, and in the process of grieving we come into some new wholeness. We create a way to incorporate, literally to take into our bodies, that which has become formless. Like the caterpillar, we go into a cocoon to a safe place so that the old self can dissolve and a new self can be created.

Like the art of losing, this metamorphosis is not automatic. It does not happen simply in the course of time. Rather, it is a self-conscious act. Grieving is a path to self-realization because in the process of grieving we acknowledge that which we choose not to lose. In the art of losing we can choose who we will be. We break but we break open so that we can include more of life, more of love. We get bigger in order to carry with us what we choose to continue loving.

Excerpted from Good Grief: Healing Through the Shadow of Loss.

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My Wife, Marg

By Ken Penrose of Ontario, Canada

My wife, Marg, died on September 3, 2000 at age 60. She valiantly had fought for her life over three years with metastatic breast cancer.

Marg and I were happily married for 40 years and went steady for five years before we were married. We had a daughter (Debbie) and two sons (Doug and Paul). They are currently ages 38, 37, and 34 respectively. Among them, I also have seven beautiful grandchildren ranging in age from six months to seven years.

In January 2001, when looking at photos of our vacations in Naples, Florida in the early 1990’s, I decided to spend a week there revisiting these memories in person. This was a most significant yet bittersweet healing intervention. I walked the beaches we had walked, and went to the same hotels and restaurants we had been to. I focused on being guided by my feelings for the entire week. It was an intense yet highly satisfying experience.

When I was in Naples, Florida, I found from reading Tom Attig’s book *The Heart of Grief* that when I could let go of the painful yearning and longing to have Marg by my side and could instead focus on all of the wonderful memories of our holidays together there, I would experience a real shift toward lightness and gratification. This worked very well! What a great insight to find that grieving is not about letting go. I can continue to feel and express my love in separation. Tom helped me to see how I can keep my love for Marg alive in new ways. The heart of grieving is really about loving people in separation.

Thanks again to Tom Attig. I focused on Marg’s legacy and what it is about her that I wanted to continue to integrate into my being. I knew that she was a very positive person and stayed positive throughout her illness. I knew she would want me to get back to being a positive person, and I’m committed to doing this. Marg was so loving, accepting, and non-judgmental of others. This I take with me to work on as well. Marg was a quietly spiritual person and got to a great place of peace, love, and acceptance through her illness. I’m taking this legacy with me, too.

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