



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



We need not walk alone.

Volume 9, Issue 2

Tyler, Texas

February 2008

Monthly Group Meeting

Tuesday, February 19, 6:30 p.m.
707 W. Houston St., Tyler, Texas

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The Meeting Agenda

6:30 p.m.
Meeting will begin with refreshments followed by announcement of birthdays and anniversaries and reading of the Credo. We will then have open discussion.
8:00 p.m.
Meeting will close by recognizing our childrens' names. Feel free to visit after the meeting or check out books from our library.

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Strange Words Welcome New Members

I am always amazed at the instant empathy we each feel as new members come to their first meeting. We have the strangest welcome for these parents: "We are so sorry you have to be here."

In other organizations the questions are probing: where did you go to school, where do you work, where do you live? All designed to "size up" the newcomer, put him or her in the proper perspective of a neatly ordered world. For us, this information is meaningless. We know the world isn't neat and orderly; we discovered that when we lost our children. We care about you, the newly bereaved parent, whose life was tossed into a cosmic blender when your child died. We care because we are you. We have been here a while, in this purgatory of pain. We have learned to live our lives in a different way, to place value on understanding and hope, the intangibles of the purest meanings of life. We have learned to value each other, to reach out and talk, to wait patiently during the silences needed to form thoughts. We listen intently as you quietly say your child's name, tell your child's story, speak of your heartbreak.

Yes, this is a different kind of welcome. But it is the most deeply sincere welcome we will ever receive. We are kindred souls, you and I. Each of us lives in the "after death" world of losing our child. Each of us has learned gradually that the hope we have attained has made life better, lessened the pain, moderated the isolation, tears, emotional devastation and pure mayhem that once overtook us. Each of us has learned this slowly, in our own time and in our own way.

Each month new parents who have suffered the most horrific loss that a human can endure are welcomed into our group. We reach out, we listen with our hearts and we remember.

*Annette Mennen Baldwin, In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX, June 2006*

Be Set Free

Express your tears and your pain. In order to move on, you cannot push down and pocket your emotions; they must be fully communicated for you to heal.

"Everyone cries," "Everyone sheds tears." Some people do it on the outside, but some are only capable of doing it on the inside. From a health perspective, the shedding of tears is very beneficial to physical well-being.

"The people who are unable or haven't developed the capacity to cry are carrying a heavier load of emotion that can actually contribute to some physical difficulties. I don't think you should ever apologize for your tears because you never apologize for something that is a gift from God."

Pull out your emotions. Face the pain head-on. Mourn loudly. Weep bitterly. Be set free.

Dr. H. Norman Wright

The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.



We need not walk alone.

“No matter what loss it is that you are grieving—remember—you are not alone.”
—Anonymous

Welcome

We extend a warm welcome to those who attended their first TCF meeting last month.

We deeply regret the circumstances that brought you to our TCF Chapter. The Compassionate Friends is a mutual assistance, not-for-profit, self-help organization that offers support and understanding to families who have experienced the death of a child. You are cordially invited to attend our monthly meeting (always the third Tuesday of the month). The meeting is open to everyone and free of charge. You are free to talk, cry or to sit in silence; we respect the individuality of mourning. Comments shared in the meetings remain confidential.

Our chapter is operated entirely by volunteers dedicated to furthering the work of TCF. Your voluntary, tax deductible donations honor your loved one(s) in a meaningful way by enabling us to print and mail this newsletter and meet other expenses involved in reaching out to other grieving families (100% of funds are used for this outreach). Donations, along with the name of the person being honored, may be sent to:

The Compassionate Friends of Tyler
P.O. Box 9714
Tyler, Texas 75711

To Our New Members

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But, you have nothing to lose and much to gain. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. The second, third or fourth meeting might be the time you will find the right person—or just the right words spoken that will help you in your grief work.

To Our Old Members

We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick. Each meeting we have new parents. Think back—what would it have been like for you if there had not been any “oldies” to welcome you, share your grief and encourage you? It was from them you heard, “Your pain will not always be this bad; it really does get softer.”

The Many Questions Asked by Those Who Are Grieving

As I wandered in amongst the graves, I found myself saying out loud, “How do people do this?” It just rolled off my tongue. Then I rephrased it and said, “How do we (or I) do this?”

Indeed how do we do this business of saying goodbye, of leaving this earth and of releasing our loved ones who have left way too soon? With these questions the experience of death and dying pours out a raft of other questions.

How do we handle the pain that feels so final?
How do we even breathe or put one step in front of the other?
How do we put our loved one in the ground?
How do we handle the helplessness that loss and death leaves behind?
How do we find our way through the changes and shifts that take place?
How do we learn to move forward when our hearts want to just stay?
How do we learn to love again...to open again to life?
And the age-old question to which there is no answer...“Why?”

Bev Swanson, Author ~ Grief Connection Letter

Love Letter to My Compassionate Friends

This is my love letter to you on Valentine’s Day. When Sarah died I thought my heart would never again feel anything except pain. I was so overwhelmed with grief. My thoughts and feelings were only on my own tragedy. And then I met you.

You shared your sorrow and your tears with me. I learned of your loss, your life, your children now gone. And my heart was broken for you—my weary heart, that I thought would never care about anyone else ever again.

When you shared the hurting, vulnerable, intimate core of yourself with me, my heart was revived. When you trusted me to know your precious child and your bruised love for this one who was the delight of your heart, my exhausted soul was encouraged. Your words comfort me. Your hugs strengthen me. Your tears quench my thirst.

As I see you heal, I know that I also become whole again. When I hear you laugh, I trust that lightness will one day return to my heart. Thank you for being my compassionate friend. I love you.

Linda M. ~ TCF, Medford, OR

Please share your stories,
poems or love messages for
inclusion in our newsletter.





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“Each month new parents who have suffered the most horrific loss that a human can endure are welcomed into our group. We reach out, we listen with our hearts and we remember.” —Annette Mennen Baldwin

Love Gifts



Sara Finke in memory of Jaime Finke

Jim & Cheri Zucca in memory of Leah Zucca

Ike & Diana Weatherly in memory of
Brandon & Cameron Weatherly

Claudette Brown in memory of Terry Brown

Mary & Erin Lingle in memory of Candice Lingle

David & Teresa Terrell in memory of Andy Terrell -
use of a storage building

College-Bound Solutions for allowing TCF of Tyler
to use their facilities as our meeting place -
in memory of Nathaniel Peter Bolom

Thanks to Michael Mahfood of GroupM7.com for the
printing of the January newsletter.



Newsletter Submissions

TCF Tyler welcomes all submissions to our newsletter. Send articles, poetry, love messages and scanned photos to:

TCF Tyler • 5401 Hollytree Drive, 1204 • Tyler, Texas 75703
Or e-mail text and photos to: info@TylerTCF.org

We reserve the right to edit for space and/or content. **Deadline for submissions is the 5th day of the month.** TCF Chapters may copy articles from this publication provided credit is given to the author and the original source. Errors and Omissions: Please notify us if any of your information is incorrect.

Grief and Issues

The deepest, most painful thing that unites us and allows us to understand each other is the fact that at least one of our children has died. This shared pain brings us close together, and as we listen to each other, we do understand the shock, the raw pain, the memories that both hurt and comfort, the inability to sleep, or eat, or get enough energy together to do the yard work, or the housework. We understand the anger, the guilt, the loss of hope, and the memory lapses. So many symptoms of the deep grief that assaults our being when a precious child of any age dies are common to all of us. Our hearts are broken; at times, they seize with an actual pain. Our future with our child is gone. We will never know what they would have become. We have become foreigners, or aliens in a strange land. We know we will never be the same as we were before our loss. And it takes each of us a different amount of time to decide to live again, to know we will survive. We share so much that we wish we didn't have in common.

Jean L. ~ TCF, Pasco County

Announcements

Our Annual Butterfly Release is held in May. Information will be included in our newsletter as it becomes available. Please call (903) 258-2547 if you would like to help this year in honor and loving memory of your child.

Request for Help with the Newsletter: We are in need of donations to help pay for the cost of printing the monthly newsletter. It will cost approximately \$140 per month. We also need volunteers who will fold, staple and mail out. We know how important the newsletter is to many members and we hope to continue sending it. If not, we might send it out quarterly via mail, and post it monthly on the Web site for viewing and printing. Thanks in advance to anyone who would like to help! Call (903) 258-2547.

New Deadline for the Newsletter: We encourage all members to submit articles, poems or quotes for publication in our newsletter. The deadline for submissions is the 5th day of the month.

TCF of Tyler Memorial Quilt

If you would like to have your child's photo included on the fourth memorial quilt, please mail a \$25 donation to P.O. Box 9714, Tyler, TX 75711. For more information contact us at (903) 258-2547, or email us at info@TylerTCF.org.

Thanks to Teresa and David Terrell for donating their talent and time on these beautiful quilts which will be displayed in our meeting room and at future special events.



Thank you for your generous donations to TCF of Tyler. These 'love gifts' allow us to provide our local chapter with special events, the TCF Newsletter, our Web site and more!





We need not walk alone.

"Death plays no favorites it seems. We are all vulnerable, and most losses hurt to the core of our being." —Anonymous

February Birthdays



Justin Clakley
2-25-83 ~ 5-15-03
Son of Teri Clakley



Michelle "Missy" Green
2-09-69 ~ 1-30-93
Daughter of Elena Glasscock



Dylan Corey
2-21-97 ~ 1-24-01
Son of Christy Corey



Colleen Herriage
2-23-67 ~ 5-14-83
Daughter of Ruth Herriage



Caleb Scott Jones
2-27-86 ~ 7-24-03
Son of Lee Ann Colwell



Shane McDade
2-17-85 ~ 4-12-03
Son of Gina McDade Culligan



Walter Dale "Skipper" Winningham
2-23-68 ~ 7-02-85
Son of Lucy Winningham



Kody Maner
2-10-87 ~ 4-16-06
Son of Lauri Maner



Sean Smith
2-2-87 ~ 10-27-01
Son of Randy & Judy Smith



Mary Jennifer Stone
2-22-81 ~ 9-21-96
Daughter of Dick & Denise Stone



Chasen Sean Shirley
2-13-82 ~ 7-3-06
Son of Debbie Shirley



John Andy Terrell
2-11-72 ~ 11-25-03
Son of David & Teresa Terrell



Cheryl Heerdt
2-22-71 ~ 2-22-81
Granddaughter of Larry Batte

We have a special birthday basket at our meetings for members to choose an item during the month of their child's birthday.

The Healing Power of Love & Grace ~ from Woundedness to a New Wholeness

The healing process is just that—a process. And if we give ourselves permission to fully experience that process, intense emotions and all, we may open a pathway for love and grace to enter our 'fractured hearts' and to create the hope and possibility of reconnecting our inner world. That reconnection may give us the courage to move forward from our woundedness to a new and different level of wholeness—a wholeness that allows us to go out into the world and be the instruments of love and light we are all destined to be.

*Deb Lee Gould, Director, FOD Family Support Group
(Excerpt from www.FODSupport.org/loveandgrace.htm)*



Ijuan Deshaun Simms
2-20-79 ~ 11-7-01
Son of Sharon Simms



Candice Lingle
2-21-91 ~ 11-8-93
Daughter of Mary Lingle



We need not walk alone.

"And Compassionate Friends is just full of teachers. Do they have all the answers? Maybe not. But they are there for you, and sometimes, that's what you need the most." —*Sharon Peymon*

February Anniversaries



Cheryl Heerd
2-22-71 ~ 2-22-81
Granddaughter of Larry Batte



Richard Heerd
10-31-76 ~ 2-22-81
Grandson of Larry Batte



Josh Chambers
7-20-73 ~ 2-18-07
Son of Joan Curtis



Austin Dixon
10-20-88 ~ 2-19-07
Son of Don & Leslie Dixon



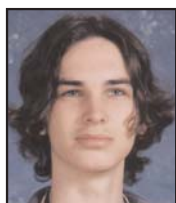
Jackie Heerd
6-30-1946 ~ 2-22-1981
Daughter of Larry Batte



Darell Bolton
7-21-61 ~ 2-22-2003
Brother of Kathy Bolton-Polk



Lori Campbell
8-27-78 ~ 2-58-00
Daughter of Pam Johnson



Ryszard Spakovsky
12-2-80 ~ 2-20-98
Sherrell & Greg Smith, Foreign
Exchange Parents



Tiffany Johnston
12-29-81 ~ 2-20-98
Daughter of Sherrell & Greg Smith



Michael Schmidt
3-11-83 ~ 2-10-03
Son of Patricia Jeffery



James Brady Langston
10-13-96 ~ 2-15-01
Son of Jamie Langston Dacus



John Wallace
7-1-80 ~ 2-2-99
Son of Barbara Wallace



Adam Thomas Pritchard
9-21-82 ~ 2-21-04
Son of
Thomas & Ginger Pritchard

Valentine Memories

The talk about Valentine's Day memories in today's online sharing really hit home for me. This morning I tackled an activity I've kept putting off since our son, Lance, died in November 1999. I decided to pack all the odds and ends in Lance's room into boxes. As I handled all the things that had been important to him, I found it so emotional and the memories (and the tears) just overpowered me. I picked up one of his favorite books, one I'd read to him a jillion times and saw something sticking out at the top like a bookmark. I turned it over and it was a photograph that just clutched at my heart and reminded me again of all the joy Lance brought to us and others in his short life.

Lance was born with cerebral palsy and it affected his entire body. But the glorious thing is that it never hampered his spirit or the happiness and joy with which he moved through the world. The picture I found was taken the year Lance was selected as Valentine King at his school. My wife, Beverly, and I went to the Valentine Ball that evening. Lance was in a wheelchair and could not stand or walk. But, oh how he wanted to dance like the others. Finally, Bev and I took him out of his chair and held him under the arms as he "danced" with the Valentine Queen. The look on his face was one I'll never forget—pure joy, pure delight, blazing with energy. Lance stomped his feet up and down with the music, moved his arms back and forth and filled that room with laughter. Of course, he didn't want to stop and we danced ruts in the floor before it was all over. Beverly and I were worn out, but he was still raring to go with every song. That evening is still one of my fondest memories among all those I treasure about Lance.

I'm so glad we were willing to go through all that physical exertion to make it possible for him to dance. I believe that if I could open a window to heaven right now, he'd still be dancing. Thanks for letting me share.

Harold Hopkins ~ TCF, Lawrenceville, GA



We need not walk alone.

"The wondrous thing we all do is give each other unconditional support. We are named appropriately. We are the compassionate friends." —Jean L.

Michael's Story - The Big Brother

Michael Reza Peymon was born on Sept. 18, 1979, in Texarkana, TX. He was not due until mid-October, but a bladder infection caused labor to start early. My labor began early that morning, and by the time we arrived at the hospital, it was pretty obvious that this baby was not going to wait three more weeks to be born. I still remember the nurses laughing when I said, "But I'm not ready to have this baby today!" There was a roomful of nursing students from New Zealand who were observing in Labor and Delivery. I recognized them because I had worked at the hospital for the last year, first in the cafeteria, then as a Soil Processing Technician, a job I transferred to because it paid more. When the nurse first glimpsed the baby's head as he crowned, they all exclaimed, "Look at all that hair. It's going to be a girl." Well, he proved them wrong. Since he came early, he was small, just six pounds, four ounces. Newborn diaper shirts swallowed him. He was four days old before I was allowed to hold him, due to my illness. We left the hospital after one week. For his first few months of life, people often mistook him for a girl, because of his full head of hair and long eyelashes. He was originally named Alireza, a combination of two popular boys names in my husband's native Iran. Later, at the age of fifteen, his name was changed to Michael after my husband became a citizen, because he wanted "something more American".

Michael was the only grandchild of my parents for the first eight years of his life, and, needless to say, was spoiled. There was not a time we visited them that they weren't giving him something. My mother gave him his first bottle of cologne at the tender age of four, which he applied diligently before heading out to play with the next-door neighbor's daughters. Often when we visited, my father would remark, "That boy needs a haircut," and off to the barbershop they would go. I'm so thankful now that he spent a lot of time with them.

From the time he was little, we had told Michael that some day he would be a big brother. He would always get excited about this. In summer of 1987, when he was seven, we told him that the day was coming. He looked at me in surprise, "You're going to have a baby?" The doctor's office gave me a book chronicling a baby's development, week by week, and during my pregnancy, I would explain to Michael what the baby was doing. He was always enthralled by this, and I think it helped him prepare for the baby's arrival. He had already left for the bus stop on the morning of March 2, 1988, when my water broke. We were living in Magnolia, AR, and the hospital was in Texarkana, 55 miles away. My husband, Tom, went to get him before the school bus arrived. Michael at first thought he was in trouble when he saw his father, but quickly learned that this was the day he would become a big brother.

Sherene was born that morning at 10:35. The nurses gave Michael a button to wear that said, "I'm a big brother." He came into the recovery room, where they took me after having a Ceasarian section, informing me that he had just seen his new sister get her first bath. When he spoke to his grandmother on the phone about it, he proclaimed, "She was a mess!" He came to the hospital each day to see us, always wanting to go to the nursery. When we came home, he proudly told his friends and teacher about his new sister. He seem fascinated by her, having not been around any babies before. He gave her a hard time from the beginning, though. Once I checked on Sherene in her bassinette, finding that her brother had tied the legs of her sleeper together! He never acted or appeared jealous of the attention his sisters got.

Michael made friends easily and had many. One of his friends lived just a few houses down from us in Arkansas. On a late summer afternoon, I went to retrieve him for supper. The little boy who lived there was playing in the front yard and informed me that Michael had borrowed his bike because he wanted to run away from home. I was newly pregnant, and frantic, and Tom was working in Dallas, coming home maybe every couple of weeks. A search of the campus turned up nothing. I phoned Tom and my parents, and then the police. I also searched the park and anywhere else I could think of, trying not to let my imagination get the best of me. After maybe an hour and a half, I received a call that the police had found him about a half mile away at the bowling alley. Trying to stay calm, I drove over. When I got there, the officer was talking to him while he drank a Sprite. I didn't know whether to hug him or spank him first. He told me he "just wanted to see what running away was like." I think he had seen something about a child running away on TV and thought it was a big adventure. That was the last time he did that. He got a spanking from me that night, and one from his father when he came home a few days later.

We moved to Fort Worth when Sherene was three months old. I had graduated from college that spring, and after a final semester of making up work I had missed due to the delivery, I was burned out and just wanted to stay home. The next year, our youngest daughter, Sara, arrived in September. Months earlier, when I had just found out I was pregnant but had not yet told Michael, we were in the car when Michael asked if I had another baby, would it be born in Texarkana? I explained that it would not be practical and would have it in the Fort Worth area. "But that's not fair. It will feel left out." To this day I feel like he probably suspected.

Michael spent many of his childhood years living on college campuses, first in Magnolia, and later, in Nacogdoches, when I entered graduate school. This was a challenge for us, as Tom went to work at the Tyler Airport and I had classes 3 evenings a week. During the day, I would study and complete assignments while the kids were at school. Michael usually watched the girls in the evening while I was in class. In the summers, I attended morning classes. My last semester before graduating in August, I completed an internship at an MHMR in Lufkin, leaving Michael in charge of the girls each morning. He complained about it, of course, but knew his evenings would be free to skateboard and hang out with his friends.

Sherene and Sara have a distinct advantage, having their older brother be so involved in their lives from an early age. They were always together. One of my favorite pictures is of the three of them, snuggled under a blanket on the floor while watching TV. The girls trusted him a lot and believed anything he told them, which he sometimes took too far. I remember him telling them once that "you can brush your teeth with Cheetos." They looked at me to confirm this, and I was laughing so hard I could barely get out "No, you can't!"

Michael graduated from Whitehouse High School in May, 1998. I videotaped the whole thing, including him and another classmate "High Fiving" each other as they prepared to walk the stage. He seemed reluctant about starting college, not sure what he wanted to study. He earned money waiting tables, and I will always remember going out for lunch one Sunday at Paco's II, where he had his first waiting job. Over the next several years, he waited tables at El Chico's, Chili's, and was one of the first servers hired at Cheddar's when they opened. After he died, it was a long time before we could eat at Cheddar's again, but it's just one of many "firsts" that we had to do. Seeing the servers in their

Cont. on page 7





We need not walk alone.

“As I see you heal, I know that I also become whole again. When I hear you laugh, I trust that lightness will one day return to my heart. Thank you for being my compassionate friend. I love you.” —Linda M.

blue shirts and ties made me look for Michael, and it's always difficult to remember that he's not there.

Michael finally made the decision to major in Political Science. Having grown up listening to the news each evening, he had a keen interest in international relations. He and Tom often discussed the revolution in Iran, which began the same year we married. He was within a year of getting his Bachelor's Degree, and talked about applying to Graduate school. After his death, the Political Science Dept. at UT-Tyler established the "Michael Peymon Outstanding Graduate in Political Science Award" to recognize students "who have achieved academic excellence in the face of adversity." Michael developed Epilepsy at the age of fourteen. He usually had it under control with medication, but during times of stress, the risk of a seizure was great. While he was in school, he had to really learn to manage stress to avoid a seizure. We have learned that Epilepsy, like so many illnesses, is genetic, although no other family members have it.

In the spring of 2005, Michael was diagnosed with Crohn's Disease. Tom and Sherene both have Colitis, so we were already somewhat familiar with managing digestive problems. That December, my mother passed away, having been in and out of the hospital for heart-related problems. Her funeral was on Dec. 23. During this time, Michael complained of not feeling well, but we thought it was just stress or the flu. I took him to the Emergency Room on the night of Dec. 28, and he was admitted. The doctor could not seem to pinpoint an exact cause of his symptoms, and when he began feeling better, discharge was planned for Dec. 31, New Year's Eve. That morning, Michael phoned me around seven, complaining of pain and bloating. When I arrived at the hospital and spoke to the nurse, she informed me, "He just needs to eat." I insisted she call the doctor. Mothers just know when their child isn't well, even if they are an adult. After some tests, which we were told did not reveal much, the decision to operate was made. The doctor came out at 11 PM to tell us that he had to remove Michael's spleen because it had ruptured, stating that there was still a chance he might not make it. We spent a very long night in the ICU waiting room. At 2:30 that morning, the girls and I made the decision to run home and check on our pets. Tom said he would not phone me if Michael died, because he did not want to tell me over the phone. My knees felt like rubber as I re-entered the hospital to learn Michael was still alive.

We returned home the next morning after speaking to the ICU doctor and nurses. They had worked on Michael very diligently all night, and were good about giving us updates. We had been told that the doctor would take him back into surgery early Monday morning. After sleeping for several hours and waiting for family to arrive, we went back to the hospital. The head of the bed was raised up, and Michael was wide awake. He could not speak because of the ventilator, but could make eye contact, blink, and raise his hand. While I was in the room, he motioned for me to look over at the opposite side of the room. There was nothing over there except a toilet, and when I asked him what he was trying to show me, he shrugged and gave up. To this day, I wonder what it was that he wanted me to see. He did not appear frightened. I like to think it was an angel, or my mother. It was obviously something, or someone, he was interested in. He did not appear to be "doped up" on pain medication.

The next morning, thirty minutes after being taken into surgery a second time, the surgeon came out and said, "It's not good." Michael's liver, stomach, and intestines had died from blood clots. We were informed "If he were mine, I'd take him off the ventilator and let him go." It was like being hit by a truck. After phoning family members to relay the news, we returned to his room and had the ventilator taken out. We did not know how long he had. I told the girls they did not have to remain in the room, but if they didn't, they might one day regret it. They both decided to stay.

We spent the next seven hours crying, praying, and remembering our oldest and only son. His first tooth, his favorite childhood nursery rhyme ("Old King Cole"), his first day of school (I'm the only one who cried when he got on the bus), getting his driver's license, his first job, graduating from high school, starting college, being excited about the future and making plans. You don't want to give up hope, and that's exactly what we were having to do. Several friends and coworkers came by to support us during this time, and I will always be grateful for them. Late that afternoon, Michael's doctor informed us for the first time that there could be a genetic condition responsible. It felt like a bad science fiction movie. Later, we were each tested for the gene. Tom and I are both carriers. Sherene is homozygous, and Sara carries the gene. Sherene must now take a prescription level dose of Folic Acid for the rest of her life, and not do anything to increase her risk for blood clots.

He passed away at around 6 PM that evening, just as dusk was setting in. I remember watching the sunset and thinking how ironic that he would die at the same time of day, and on the same day of the week, as my mother. Several months before she died, she had remarked that she feared he would not live a long life, due to his health problems. I am comforted by the similarities of their deaths. In some strange way, it reminds me that God knows the reason for this, even if we don't.

We had Michael's body cremated. When my mother died, he had stated that he could not stand the thought of being embalmed and buried. It was at least a relief to know what his wishes were. A pastor and family friend who had been one of Tom's professors in college over twenty years ago led the service. Sherene and Sara spoke about their brother and how he had always looked out for them. His ashes now rest in our home. We have an advantage in that we don't have to drive to a cemetery. His picture and ashes are the first things my eyes fall on every morning and the last thing I see at night. I ask myself each day what he would be doing if he were still here. I will always believe that Michael saved his sister's life. Up until he died, he did just what he'd always done, look out for her.

It took six months before I could bring myself to attend a Compassionate Friend's meeting, and I cried all the way through it. I even felt angry that they could laugh. How could they possibly have anything to laugh about? But they have all been good role models. In time, I've learned that it's okay to get angry, laugh, etc. You do whatever you have to do. As a licensed therapist, I've worked with clients on grief, depression, anger, you name it. It is different when it's you it's happening to. I realized I could not deal with this myself. Often the best teachers are the ones who've been there. And Compassionate Friends is just full of teachers. Do they have all the answers? Maybe not. But they are there for you, and sometimes, that's what you need the most.

Sharon Peymon ~ TCF, Tyler, TX

Editor's Note: Michael's story was intended for the January issue. We apologize for overlooking it.





We need not walk alone.

"February ~ Let this cool and gentle month of the heart remind you not only of lost treasure but also of riches (past and present) in your life." —*Sascha*

A Child Of Mine (To All Parents)

Edgar Guest

I will lend you, for a little time,
 A child of mine, He said.
 For you to love the while he lives,
 And mourn for when he's dead.
 It may be six or seven years,
 Or twenty-two or three.
 But will you, till I call him back,
 Take care of him for Me?
 He'll bring his charms to gladden you,
 And should his stay be brief.
 You'll have his lovely memories,
 As solace for your grief.
 I cannot promise he will stay,
 Since all from earth return.
 But there are lessons taught down there,
 I want this child to learn.
 I've looked the wide world over,
 In search for teachers true.
 And from the throngs that crowd life's lanes,
 I have selected you.
 Now will you give him all your love,
 Nor think the labour vain.
 Nor hate me when I come
 To take him home again?
 I fancied that I heard them say,
 'Dear Lord, Thy will be done!'
 For all the joys Thy child shall bring,
 The risk of grief we'll run.
 We'll shelter him with tenderness,
 We'll love him while we may,
 And for the happiness we've known,
 Forever grateful stay.
 But should the angels call for him,
 Much sooner than we've planned.
 We'll brave the bitter grief that comes,
 And try to understand.

There's A Valentine Waiting For You

There's a valentine waiting for you,
 That's different from all the others.
 It's there every month at our meetings
 Of heartbroken fathers and mothers.
 Its envelope is made of caring
 The glue of understanding seals it tight.
 This non-judgmental group who've "been there"
 Help to take away your fear and fright.

So, come join with us together,
 Read your loving message printed clear.
 In not only this month's valentine,
 But all those throughout the year.

Mary C., Lawrence, GA; from Bereaved Parents USA

A Valentine of Love

Author Unknown

As long as I can dream,
 As long as I can think,
 As long as I can have memory...
 I will love you.

As long as I have eyes to see
 And ears to hear,
 And lips to speak...
 I will love you.

As long as I have a heart to feel,
 A soul stirring within me,
 An imagination to hold you...
 I will love you.

As long as there is time,
 As long as there is love,
 As long as I have breath
 To speak your name...
 I will love you.

Because I love you more than anything in the world.

Death is nothing at all

I have only slipped away into the next room
 I am I and you are you
 Whatever we were to each other
 That we are still
 Call me by my old familiar name
 Speak to me in the easy way you always used
 Put no difference into your tone
 Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow
 Laugh as we always laughed
 At the little jokes we always enjoyed together
 Play, smile, think of me, pray for me
 Let my name be ever the household word that it always was
 Let it be spoken without effort
 Without the ghost of a shadow in it
 Life means all that it ever meant
 It is the same as it ever was
 There is absolute unbroken continuity
 What is death but a negligible accident?
 Why should I be out of mind
 Because I am out of sight?
 I am waiting for you for an interval
 Somewhere very near
 Just around the corner
 All is well.
 Nothing is past; nothing is lost
 One brief moment and all will be as it was before
 How we shall laugh at the trouble of parting when we meet
 again!

*Canon Henry Scott-Holland, 1847-1918,
 Canon of St Paul's Cathedral*

The Compassionate Friends of Tyler

P.O. Box 9714
Tyler, TX 75711

We are happy to send our newsletter to you. We hope that it is helpful to you to be kept informed of chapter resources and activities and that you still wish to receive our newsletters that contain excellent material relating to grief issues.

To keep our mailing list current, we do ask to hear from you each year making sure that our information is correct and that you still wish to receive our mailings. If we did not hear from you in the last year please indicate any appropriate choices below and return the form to the address at the bottom of this page.

Your Name: _____

Child's Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Birth Date: _____ Death Date: _____ Cause of Death: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Please check any of following that apply.

Please continue sending the newsletter.

No thank you, I'd prefer to stop receiving the newsletter.

Please include my child's name and picture in the slide presentation at the Candle Lighting Ceremony.

Please include my child's picture and information on the TCF-Tyler Web site. (www.TylerTCF.org)

I am enclosing a memorial to support The Compassionate Friends in the amount of _____
Please make check payable to TCF

In memory of _____

The continuation of this chapter's work depends on donations. If you have not taken the opportunity to give a donation in memory of your child please consider taking this time to give a gift that will help reach out to other newly bereaved parents.

We must have your written permission on file to use your child's name and/or picture in the newsletter, Web site, Candle Lighting Ceremony or any other TCF event. Permission may be withdrawn at any time by written request. This information is used to maintain our Chapter Database. It is confidential and is only utilized for Chapter activities such as the newsletter.

(Signature) Date: _____

Please return completed form to: The Compassionate Friends of Tyler, P.O. Box 9714, Tyler, TX 75711



"I don't think you ever stop giving. I really don't. I think it's an on-going process. And it's not just about being able to write a check. It's being able to touch somebody's life." —Oprah Winfrey



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

P.O. Box 9714
Tyler, Texas 75711



We need not walk alone.



www.TylerTCF.org