



**THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS**  
**FARGO/MOORHEAD AREA CHAPTER**  
 Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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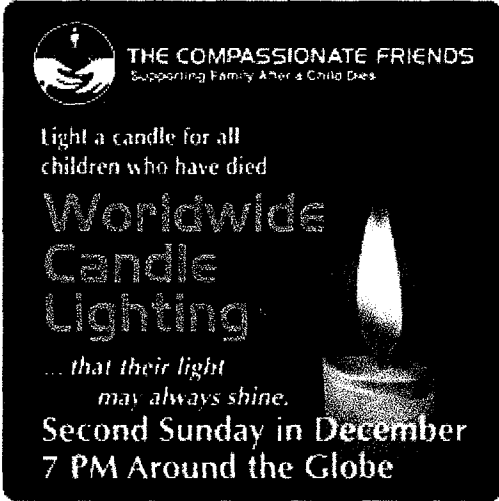
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The F-M Area Chapter of The Compassionate Friends meets the 2nd Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. at FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH 127 2ND AVE E WEST FARGO, ND Please enter on the West side. Our meeting is in the Fellowship Hall - lower level, west side.  
**Meeting Topic - Candlelighting Ceremony**  
 Upcoming Meetings  
 December 12th  
 January 9th

**Dates to Remember**  
 Worldwide Candle Lighting® - 7 p.m. December 8th  
 Mom's meeting - 7 p.m. December 26th @ Fry'n Pan TCF National Conference - Chicago, IL July 11-13, 2014

**LOVE GIFTS**  
 Lyle, Tammy, Justin, Stacy, Jaime, Jordyn, Hunter & Jersey Helgeson in memory of their son/brother, Jared Helgeson  
 Deb Wayman in memory of her daughter, Heather Nicole Wren  
 Cathy & Greg Gronland in memory of daughter, Tara Lea Kellar  
 Suzie & Jim Hill in memory of son, Jonathan Poitra  
 Denny & Pat Wateland in memory of daughter, Tracy Ann Wateland  
 Scott & Ruth Blilie in memory of daughter, Nicole Anne Blilie  
 We are deeply grateful for the LOVE GIFTS given this month.  
 Our chapter and all chapters, are financed solely through your Love Gifts.  
 Donations make this newsletter, postage, books, tapes, etc. possible.  
 Thank you for your tax deductible gifts.

**OUR CREDO**  
 We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.  
**WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE.**  
**WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS. ©2007**



**Worldwide Candle Lighting**  
 The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting, held annually the second Sunday in December, this year December 8th, unites family and friends around the globe as they light candles for one hour to honor and remember children who have died at any age from any cause. As candles are lit at 7 p.m. local time, creating a virtual wave of light, hundreds of thousands of persons

commemorate and honor the memories of children in a way that transcends all ethnic, cultural, religious, and political boundaries.

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift from TCF to the bereavement community, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

## Have You Decorated Your Tree?

My tree is clothed in dark and light  
And I sit before it in the night.  
Remembering how, with loving care,  
A child once hung those trinkets there.

And though the tree seems fully dressed,  
Alone, I now must hang the rest.  
Then the tree with greater love will shine  
With memories of that son of mine.

I hang the sparkle from his eyes  
That shone each day with sweet surprise.  
I hang a gentle heart-shaped kiss,  
And a glowing ball of childlike bliss.

I hang a bow of loving charms,  
and a hug he once held in his arms.  
Now every light will hold a part  
Of all the memories of my heart.

For though my grief will never sleep,  
His heart would break, and he would weep.  
If we never again felt the Christmas joy  
That was so much a part of my angel boy.  
~Lynette Siler, TCF/Troy, MI

## CHRISTMAS AGAIN?

A thousand tiny Christmas trees,  
For our one lost tiny child.  
To give her Christmas all year long  
In the beauty of the wild.  
Her short life came and went so fast  
She didn't have a chance  
To know what Christmas was about,  
She never had a glance.  
That first Christmas with her gone  
Was much to much to bear.  
The joyous song and happy smiles  
I could not see as fair.  
And so we ran away that year  
To a cabin in the snow  
And held each other and our pain.  
Our tears would help us grow.  
Each year slips by and then again  
The Holidays are near.  
Some things have gotten better,  
And yet I hold some fear.  
That never more shall Christmas be  
A time of such delight.  
My hollow heart cannot be filled  
Since Caitlya died that night

~ Irene Mosmann, TCF/Saskatoon, SK  
*Reflections From the Heart*

## 2014 FM TCF Chapter Meeting Dates

January 9th  
February 13th  
March 13th  
April 10th  
May 8th  
June 12th  
July 10th  
August 14th  
September 11th  
October 9th  
November 13th  
December 11th

## ADJUSTED

"It's been several years since your son died,"  
They say, "Surely, you must have  
adjusted by now."  
Yes, I am adjusted —  
Adjusted to feeling pain  
And sadness and grief and guilt and loss.  
Adjusted to hurting and unexpected tears.  
Adjusted to seeing people made  
uncomfortable upon  
Hearing me say "My son died."  
Adjusted to losing my best friend because  
I'm not always "up."  
Adjusted to people acting as if grief is contagious.  
And TCF meetings are "morbid."  
Adjusted? Oh, yes, to many things.  
Knowing I won't hear his voice, but listening for it still.  
Knowing I won't see him drive his Toronado,  
But staring at every one I see.  
Adjusted to feeling empty on his birthday  
And wishing for just one more time with him.  
Adjusted: As life goes on —  
To realizing I cannot expect everyone I meet  
To wear a bandage — just because I am still bleeding...  
~ Shirley Blakely Curle, TCF/Central AR

## THE SAMPLER

Carefully stitched and knitted  
By our controlling hand,  
a design just to our liking,  
a pattern we had planned.  
Comfortable, familiar,  
Held up for all to see,  
A source of pride and pleasure  
defining who we are.  
Thus doubled our consternation,  
when tragedy arrives  
And relentless unravels  
The fabric of our lives.

POEMS by Richard A Dew, M.D. from his book of poems  
"Rachel's Cry, A Journey Through Grief", 1996

## "DON'T STEAL MY GRIEF"

Don't try to make me feel better,  
By quipping your cute jokes.  
Don't try to rob me of my pain,  
When I need it as my cloak.  
I know you probably think,  
You're doing me a favor,  
But what you don't understand,  
Is that my sadness is my savior.  
Don't try to steal my right,  
To express my grief in my own way.  
You see, I lost my child,  
And grief is the price that I must pay.  
I need to feel the hurt and pain,  
As it beats inside my chest.  
Don't try to steal my grief,  
When it's the only feeling I have left.

~Faye McCord, Co-Chapter Leader, TCF/Jackson, MS  
In loving memory of my son, Lane McCord

## A HOLIDAY WREATH

*A holiday wreath is a traditional part of the holidays in many homes. It can be a simple arrangement of fresh greens in which four candles are placed. As you light each candle this year you may create a new ritual which will become a lasting tradition for the holiday season. We hope that this memorial will help you include your loved one in the holiday season.*

As we light these four candles in honor of you, we light one for our GRIEF, one for our COURAGE, one for our MEMORIES and one for our LOVE.

This candle represents our GRIEF. The pain of losing you is intense. It reminds us of the depth of our love for you.

This candle represents our COURAGE – to confront our sorrow, to comfort each other, to change our lives.

This light is in your MEMORY – the times we laughed, the times we cried, the times we were angry with each other, the silly things you did, the caring and joy you gave us.

This light is for the light of LOVE. As we enter this holiday season, day by day we cherish the special place in our hearts that will always be reserved for you. We thank you for the gift your living brought to each of us. We love you.

From Holiday Help: Coping for the Bereaved by Sherry Gibson, B.S., R.N. and Sandra Graves, Ph.D.



The leap from grief gives us the energy, the spirit, the courage and the love to continue searching life's paths.

~ by Darcie D Sims  
"Footsteps through the Valley"

## THE NORMAL FAMILY

If you think you are going insane, THAT'S NORMAL.  
If all you can do is cry, THAT'S NORMAL.  
If you have trouble with the most minor decisions,  
THAT'S NORMAL.  
If you can't taste your food or have any semblance of an appetite, THAT'S NORMAL.  
If you have feelings of rage, denial and depression,  
THAT'S NORMAL.  
If you find yourself enjoying a funny moment and immediately feeling guilty, THAT'S NORMAL.  
If your friends dwindle away and you feel like you have the plague, THAT'S NORMAL.  
If your blood boils and hair in your nose curls when someone tells you, "It was God's Will," THAT'S NORMAL.  
If you can share your story, your feelings with an understanding listener – another bereaved parent, THAT'S A BEGINNING.  
If you can get a glimmer of your child's life rather than his/her death, THAT'S WONDERFUL.  
If you can remember your child with a smile, THAT'S HEALING.  
If you find your mirrors have become windows and you are able to reach out to other bereaved parents, THAT'S GROWING.

~ Edith Fraser

## Uncharacteristic Behaviors

When Junior, the National Zoo's resident ape went on his escape travels a few months ago, the story was recorded in the local papers. This was probably because he came close to hopping over his barrier and into the laps of his human observers, many of them children. The press called this "uncharacteristic behavior" and, in a side note, added that his long time mate, Pensy had recently died.

Now you and I would put all of this into proper perspective and agree, "Of course!" And then we would reflect upon our own "uncharacteristic behaviors" following the death of our beloved (grand) child (ren).

Many times these behaviors confound and confuse those close to us. How far will we go beyond our barriers? And will we return and be "ourselves" again? I was amazed at emotions I had never felt so strongly before. I thought that anger would become a permanent part of my reactions and I welcomed any kind of release from it. Confronting it and dealing with it was difficult. Sadness settled upon me like a soggy fleece and I thought that I might never shrug it off! And the apathy with which I met each day was very concerning, indeed! Junior's escapade brought all of my own "uncharacteristic behaviors" up from the not so distant past. Amusing?...a little; but more than that I wanted to shout with the children who watched him that late summer day, and encourage him to run and run, shaking off the grief and sadness of losing his beloved Pensy.

~ Lorie Hartsig, TCF/St. Mary's County, MD

# OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED



Birthdays and Anniversaries have been removed from the Internet version of our newsletter for security purposes





# 2013 Holiday Angels



## Given By:

THE SCHMITCKE FAMILY  
 LARRY & LOIS GANGNES  
 JIM, JODY & DANA KUTTER  
 TOM & LEAH TVEDT  
 ANDY & RHONDA BJELLAND  
 KEITH & SANDRA KISER  
 AL & CHAR ZAESKE  
 DICK & DIANE MACGREGOR  
 JOHN & KELLY BORGEN  
 JOHN & SHARON MAURER  
 CRAIG & DEANNA BRAUN  
 DONNA & ROY KORNELIUS  
 MARY VASECKA  
 MIKE & SHERYL CVIJANOVICH

JACK & JUNE VOLK

RICHARD & CLARE ELLESS  
 JOE & VINCENT LEGGIO  
 RANDY & DEBBIE FREED

RICHARD & LINDA OLSON  
 RUTH JELINEK  
 DEB DEWITZ  
 JOHN & TERRI HELLAND  
 TERRY & CAROL MERCIER  
 JERRY & ARLENE MUNIGHAN  
 DEAN & JO ALLMENDINGER  
 SEARS FAMILY  
 DOREEN HALVORSON  
 GREG & DELORES BEYERS  
 ANNE & JERRY BARBEE  
 TODD & SUZIE KAPAUN  
 STEVE & LISA EICHOLTZ  
 LYLE, TAMMY, JUSTIN, STACY, JAIME,

JORDYN, HUNTER AND JERSEY HELGESON

PETER & CHRISTINE MURCH  
 BECKY NELSON  
 DENNY & PAT WATELAND  
 MOM & DAD (CHRISTI & CURT SWANSON)  
 SUZIE & JIM HILL  
 DEBBIE MARKEY  
 MARK & HELLA HELFTER  
 CATHY & GREG GRONLAND  
 JOHN & NANCY TEEUWEN & FAMILY

PAUL & KARA BAILEY & FAMILY

SCOTT & RUTH BLILIE  
 DIANE FENSKE & FAMILY

## In Memory of:

DUANE SCHMITCKE  
 BRENT M. GANGNES  
 MICHELLE KUTTER  
 DANE ADAM TVEDT  
 HALLIE BJELLAND  
 CORDELL A. KISER  
 BRUCE ZAESKE  
 SANDRA MACGREGOR CASELLA  
 KARI BORGEN  
 JODY ANN MAURER KNUDSON  
 ANDREW BRAUN  
 LANNIE LEE KORNELIUS  
 CORRINE HOEFKER  
 MATTHEW CVIJANOVICH  
 KELLY BOYES  
 JEFF VOLK  
 DAVID VOLK  
 TARI ELLESS HELLER  
 ANNIE PAGE LEGGIO  
 TYLER FREED  
 TRAVIS FREED  
 MATTHEW OLSON  
 JEREMIAH JELINEK  
 SARAH DEWITZ MARTINSEN  
 HEIDI HELLAND  
 JAMIE BETH MERCIER  
 JEFF MUNIGHAN  
 LUCAS ALLMENDINGER  
 GREG SEARS  
 LEE HALVORSON  
 TAMERA K. CHAPUT  
 MATTHEW J. GAFFNEY  
 DILLON KAPAUN  
 TYLER EICHOLTZ

JARED HELGESON  
 VALERIE MURCH  
 RYAN NELSON  
 TRACY ANN WATELAND  
 AMANDA JO SWANSON  
 JONATHAN POITRA  
 TIM MARKEY  
 DAVID MICHAEL HELFTER  
 TARA LEA KELLAR  
 BRANDI ROSE IRENE TEEUWEN  
 EVAN DAVID ROY  
 CARTER THOMAS OLSON  
 BURGUDY LARISSA PELZMAN  
 NICHOLAS LEE BAILEY  
 BRANDON KUCK  
 NICOLE ANNE BLILIE  
 NATHAN ANDERSON





## 2013 Holiday Angels



### Given By:

DENNIS & SHIRLEY BJERKEN  
 BLAKE & CHRISTINA DAHLBERG  
 LYNETTE MYROLD  
 RICHARD & DENISE ESKILDSEN  
 HAROLD & IRENE SCHENCK  
 DOLORES HARRIS  
 SHARON WATELAND  
 GEORGE & PATTI PRATT  
 JERRY & DEB COLE  
 SCOTT & JAMIE OLSON  
 JOHN, TAMMY, & ANDREW SADEK  
 GALEN & MARY SCHROEDER  
 NORBERT & LUELLE KLEINGARTNER  
 DAVID HALLMAN & FAMILY  
 DEBBY FACEY

JOHN & KYLENE MILLIGAN  
 ROBERT & TANYA LIVDAHL  
 ANDREW & SHAYNA SANDSTROM  
 CAROL & DAVID WINTER  
 ANNE SNYDER  
 LYNN & DONNA MICKELSON

ROBERT & ELEANOR INFELD  
 DONNA HOLLEY  
 H.D. & PAT SAMSON

CHUCK & SANDY KLINKHAMMER  
 JOHN & MARY TOBOLT  
 ERNIE & BIRDINE GRASGARRD  
 FRANK LAUMAN  
 SONIA WATELAND  
 LAURA KUEHL

DALE & MARILYN LARSON

RICK & TAMMY DERHEIM  
 NEIL & KATHY PROCHNOW & FAMILY  
 WILLIAM HAINES III  
 ARLEN & JULIE KOTTA  
 GRANDMA ELLEN PAZDRO  
 MARK & LAVERNE CZICHOTZKI  
 CAROL DUGGAN  
 CRAIG & BARB LARSON  
 ROBERT & MARY SAUNDERS

### In Memory of:

BRIAN BJERKEN  
 RILEY DAHLBERG  
 DAVID WILLIAM HALLMAN  
 JASON ESKILDSEN  
 DOUG SCHENCK  
 ALLEN HARRIS  
 TRACY ANN WATELAND  
 NANCY PRATT COASH  
 ZACHARY COLE  
 AUSTIN WAYNE WAGAR  
 NICHOLAS "NICK" SADEK  
 MATTHEW THIBEDEAU  
 DAVID MARK KLEINGARTNER  
 DAVID WILLIAM HALLMAN  
 DANA KEBLAR  
 FRED FINCH  
 MATTHEW MILLIGAN OLSON  
 MICHAEL L. LIVDAHL  
 CHRISTIANA N. SANDSTROM  
 MATTHEW WINTER  
 ADAM JOSEPH SNYDER  
 AARON DEUTSCHER  
 ALLISON DEUTSCHER  
 BRIELLE DEUTSCHER  
 UNBORN BABY DEUTSCHER  
 DARRYL INFELD  
 MATTHEW CVIJANOVICH  
 CHRIS SAMSON  
 CHERYL SAMSON  
 ALEXANDER KLINKHAMMER  
 SCOTT ANTHONY TOBOLT  
 DAVID GRASGARRD  
 KAREN LAUMAN  
 MARK ALAN WATELAND  
 DAVID KUEHL  
 WENDY KUEHL  
 JOE LARSON  
 GAIL LARSON  
 AMY LARSON  
 ERIC LARSON  
 SUE ELLEN LARSON  
 KEEGAN DERHEIM  
 REED JOEL PROCHNOW  
 ASHLEY HAINES  
 BEN KOTTA  
 MATT CVIJANOVICH  
 MIKE CZICHOTZKI  
 ROBERT (BOB) DUGGAN  
 ERIC C. LARSON  
 MATTHEW ROBERT SAUNDERS

HANSON-RUNSVOLD FUNERAL HOME  
 KORSMO FUNERAL HOME

## SIBLING PAGE

### LOOKING TO THE LIGHT

It is difficult to articulate thoughts and feelings about a life-altering event such as the death of a brother. For a long time, the only thing I could do to find any solace was to read about the tragic experiences of others. I was often moved to tears, so strong was my identification with their anguish.

I never suffered from denial. My brother's death was always a very tangible thing. It was my grief. I owned it. In accepting it, I feel that the healing was somehow expedited. I don't mean to imply that I am now returned to the unaffected individual that existed prior to his death, that my acceptance of his death is now clear,

I don't think you ever "get over" such a loss. What happens is the incorporation of that loss into your daily life. In my case, that process brought a number of changes in attitude and priority which, as it turned out, were in my best interest. I had become centered on myself and my career to such an extent that I was armed against life's disappointments. When meeting me, it became clear to others that "career" was what it was all about.

I keep pictures of my brother all around so that I can see him several times each day. In doing so, I am alternately both comforted and saddened. But mostly, I am comforted. I know he is in heaven, and I believe he looks in on me and is aware of the magical events that have taken place in my life. When I look upward through my kitchen skylights, I can see the sky and the top of the big old elm in the lights. I talk to him in my heart and I know he is near. I still shed my tears, for I miss him and will the remainder of my life.

Given a choice, I wish he had never become ill and that he hadn't ended his life. Today, some two years after his death, I can accept it and understand his choice. The love we feel for a loved one never has to leave us, even though our loved one has departed physically.

~ Rhonda St. John, TCF/Grosse Pointe Woods, MI

### LAST MOMENTS

Last moments...

Snatches of conversation  
That echo across all decades...

Priceless words  
Indelibly etched on the heart.  
Sometimes

Thoughts were never spoken,  
But unexpected sentiment-

A quick embrace,  
A silly smirk,

Or joyous laughter-  
Reaches through the pain  
And warms the heart.

We came too soon to understand  
The folly

Of harsh words  
Or neglected touch,

For who can know which taken-for-granted event  
Will become

A last moment.

~ Diane N. Fields, TCF/Westmoreland County, PA

### Miss Me A Little, But Let Me Go

When I come to the end of the road,  
And the sun has set for me.

I want no tears in a gloom filed room,  
Why cry for a soul set free!

For this is a journey we all must take,  
And each must go alone.

Miss me a little, but not for long,  
And not with your head bowed low.

When you are lonely and sick of heart,  
Go to the friends you know.

Bury your sorrows in doing good deeds,  
Miss me a little, but let me go.

Author Unknown

### I'm Sorry For The Things I Didn't Do

It's too late to say "I'm sorry"  
for the things i didn't do.

It's too late to say, "Forgive me, and I'll make it up to you"  
For you're gone now, forever, oh, if you only knew,  
"Kid Brother," just how much I miss you.

no more teasing, no more pleasing,

No more borrowing the car,

No more promising to be careful,

No more sneaking in the pickle jar.

God in Heaven, please take care

Of the brother of mine.

He was so sweet, so tender, and kind.

O, Dear God, when you see him

Please tell him for me

That I miss him something awful,

Through I have my memories.

And, Dear God, there is something

That I'm asking of you -

Ask Jimmie to please forgive me

for the things i didn't do.

~ Laura Mae Martin, TCF/Grand Junction, CO

### WHEN MY SIBLING DIED I FELT:

- that a part of me died and that I was all alone  
very angry at everything  
my childhood had died, too  
angry and sad that my family life as I had known it was over  
terrified that I would lose someone else that I loved  
cheated that I didn't have a brother  
angry at how it happened  
alone  
afraid to get close and let anyone in  
terrible  
I wanted to cry  
I felt angry, depressed, confused, drained, worried  
why did it happen to him and not some one else  
I wanted him back

~ Author Unknown

"Sorrow makes us all children again - destroys all  
differences of intellect. The wisest know nothing."

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

## **WHEN IT HURTS TOO MUCH TO TALK. ..WRITE!**

I never thought of a typewriter as a therapist until my son died. I still don't think of it as a Dr. Smith-Corona, but there's no doubt it has played an active role in resolving my grief. Maybe that's because I find it awfully hard to verbalize my deepest feelings unless I'm paying someone \$50 an hour to hear me out. And maybe it's because I don't always understand exactly how I feel until I see what I think on paper.

If some aspects of your child's death are too painful to talk about, or if you seem to be stuck at some point in your grief work, you too may find that the process of writing your thoughts out will help you clarify and come to grips with them.

Perhaps the biggest advantage of confiding in a typewriter is that the words like death and dying don't make them sweat and squirm. Bless their little keyboards, they take it all in without ever saying they know just how you feel!

Another reason is that you can write any time you need to talk, if you know how to make a pencil work. That is particularly useful in the dark of night when our struggles with grief seem to intensify and sleep eludes us. Using that time to ventilate on paper is a constructive way to use hours that would be spent tossing and turning, and the emotional release it brings is both restful and satisfying.

That feeling of release can be especially important to parents who didn't have a chance to say goodbye. One way to fill that need is to write your child a letter detailing how much their love meant to you and expressing your regret because you didn't get to tell them that. You may want to tuck the letter away with some of your child's possessions, or burn it and scatter the ashes on their grave or where you feel the wind will carry it to them.

Writing is also a safe way to discharge anger that would otherwise be directed towards our mates. Unfortunately, unjust accusations of guilt and lack of caring are a common component of grief. Painful words that are hurled at a spouse can never be reclaimed or their memory totally erased, but if they are committed to paper instead they can be burned when our rage has subsided, or hidden and reevaluated at a later date. That is one way to work at maintaining our marriages that are so vulnerable during bereavement.

An additional advantage I discovered is that writing diminished the guilt I felt over my son's death. I suspect that is frequently the case because it is so easy to list our real or imagined shortcomings when we're grieving, and so hard to remember all the good and right and special things we did to try to preserve our children's lives.

But perhaps the most compelling reason of all to write about our sons and daughters is that it preserves their memory, and that is a very special love gift to our family and our friends. As I write this I cannot help but think about my new grandson and my hope that he will learn to love the uncle that he never knew because of the book I've written about him.

Granted, that task was simpler for me because I'm a writer than it would be for those of you who aren't. But the thing we have in common is that for all of us who chose to tackle such a job, it is a labor of love. The finished product doesn't have to be bound in leather and printed in gold to be precious. It is a priceless gift even if it is handwritten and tucked in a plastic folder.

I had been a professional writer for several years before our son, Eric, died, but after his death I found it hard to write about anything except him and the way I felt. And I couldn't do much of that at one time without soaking my paper with tears. So I began by-writing -little—pieces, for our chapter newsletter. In each of those I talked about one aspect of my grief. No more.

That is one of the secrets of good writing that will help you say all you need to say. Don't try to tell your child's whole story at once, don't try to describe your grief in the space of a page. Do it bit by bit.

Start by picking up that pencil or sitting down at the keyboard and writing about one happy incident in your child's life. Don't worry about form or punctuation or spelling. Just tell about that incident from start to finish. Then go back and fill in the details. Describe the day, the setting, the sounds, the smells, the prevailing emotions, and the people involved. Rewrite, cross out, erase, fill in, correct, move words around, and use both a dictionary and thesaurus until the story sounds just right to you.

One word of caution is in order here. When you are writing, it is all too easy to remember the good things your child did and forget about the ornery, naughty things that made him or her real. Those must be included if your word portrait is to be a three dimensional picture. And besides, no sibling could or should be expected to live up to the memory of a brother or sister who was perfect.

Do this exercise three or four times and each time you repeat it, write about a different special time including at least one story you could introduce by saying, "You won't believe what he did today."

Looking at family albums and reading old letters can help you re-create those scenes. So can playing remember when with family members and friends who were involved and can help you fill in details you might have forgotten.

Getting into the swing of writing by concentrating on the good times will make it easier to wrestle with the tough emotions of grief.

One way to begin that process is to interview yourself. Pretend that you are going to write a story about a mother or father like yourself who has lost a child under circumstances almost identical to those surrounding your child's death. Make a list of questions to ask that hypothetical person and be sure to include all the ones you wish someone would give you a chance to answer. Review this list several times over a period of two or three days, and keep it close at hand so that you can add any



questions that occur to you as you mentally prepare for this interview.

Arrange the questions as nearly as possible into a chronological order and tackle them one at a time, answering each as completely as you can. As you work through the list you'll remember things you wish you'd said in answering previous questions. Consequently, using a separate sheet of paper for each will make it easier for you to add to them.

I think the advantages of writing about our grief far outweigh the disadvantages, but I wouldn't be honest if I didn't admit the negatives exist. Perhaps the greatest is the fact that this exercise is painful. It just plain hurts to mine our souls and we have to dig deep if we are to get it all out. Despite that, or because of it, writing is a healing exercise. And that is a powerful incentive for continuing what sometimes seems like torture.

You and you alone must be the judge of how much you can do, and how much you can take. It is up to you to decide when to push yourself to write a little bit more and when to take a break or quit altogether.

The work can also be frustrating. You may sit at the typewriter for hours without pecking out a single word just because you don't know where to start. And once you get going, you may write and rewrite a sentence or a paragraph or a page umpteen times and still not feel that it accurately reflects your thoughts. If that happens and you're really serious about this, it's time to head for the library and check out a few books on writing to help you over this block and through the rough spots.

Finally, the work can be emotionally exhausting. When I was writing *E.B. and I*, a book about my son, some chapters took so much out of me that I had to put the manuscript away for several weeks before I could face it again. However, the day it was finally finished, a curtain fell on my grief. After I had said everything that I needed to say, I was physically and emotionally spent, but within a few days the curtain rose and a new me stepped forth.

That's what writing about grief does for you, I think, and that's why it can be so helpful to do it. When we call that awful, powerful force by its rightful name, recognize its ramifications in our life and describe them, we can also come to grips with them and then go on to something else.

~ Judy Osgood, TCF/Central Oregon Chapter

**"...a bear wedged in great tightness."**

"In a tape called, 'To Touch a Grieving Heart' there is a wonderful little reminder of the *Winnie the Pooh* story by A. A. Milne. You may recall that Winnie goes to visit Rabbit and eats too much honey. Coming out of Rabbit's hole, he gets stuck tight – so tight he can't even sigh. He asks his friends to stay with him, read him a story, and offer words of comfort...and thus to help 'a bear wedged in great tightness.'

Notice that Pooh does not ask to be pulled out of the hole, he asks only for company so he is not alone. I think Grief is like being 'a bear wedged in great tightness.' And, while we cannot make the grief go away for each other, The Compassionate Friends starts and stops with the core idea that we will be there for each other; that 'we need not walk alone.' "

Opening remarks of the late  
Richard Edler's keynote speech at the 1996 TCF National Conference

"Some say you're too painful to remember. I say you're too precious to forget."

Our Mom's group has been meeting on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Fryn' Pan Restaurant, 300 Main Avenue, Fargo.

Our gatherings are informal as we come together to talk about our children, books that we've read, recipes we've tried, our jobs and whatever else comes up during the course of the evening. We all have times where the listening heart of another mom or grandma is welcome (and necessary). Please join us this month on Thursday December 26th. For more information please contact Sheryl at 701-235-8158 or sherylc13@msn.com.

**We must have your written permission on file to use your child's name in the newsletter.** 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.

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Death Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Signature)

Please return to: The Compassionate Friends of F-M Area, P.O. Box 10686, Fargo ND 58106  
(Please note that if you have already submitted a permission slip, you do not need to submit another one)

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**THE  
COMPASSIONATE  
FRIENDS**  
FARGO/MOORHEAD AREA CHAPTER  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

**MISSION STATEMENT:** When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

A SINCERE WELCOME TO ALL COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS... We are a nonprofit self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. We offer group support, understanding and friendship. Our purpose is to promote and aid parents and siblings in the positive resolution of the grief they are experiencing and to foster physical and emotional health. If you have questions or wish to talk directly to a member of the Fargo-Moorhead Compassionate Friends, please call any of the numbers listed.

**FARGO-MOORHEAD COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS BOARD**  
YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN THE BOARD AT ANY TIME!

Chapter Leader	John Milligan ..... 701-491-0364	Secretary	Sheryl Cvijanovich ..... 701-235-8158
Treasurer	Chuck Klinkhammer ..... 701-298-2929	Initial Contact	Jamie Olson ..... 701-219-3865
Newsletter Editor	Nancy Teeuwen..... 701-730-0805	Newsletter Database	Mike Cvijanovich ..... 701-235-8158
Website Administrator	Sheryl Cvijanovich..... 701-235-8158	Librarian	
Newsletter Printing	Joyce at Olivet Lutheran Church	Mailing Committee	Contact Us to Join

LIBRARY INFORMATION: We have an extensive library available. Please feel free to check materials at our next meeting.

**TELEPHONE FRIENDS**

HAVING A BAD DAY OR NIGHT? Feel free to call and talk to any of the following:  
John Milligan (son, 25 - car accident) ..... 701-491-0364  
Duane Skramstad (daughter, 20 - car accident; son, 2 - drowning)..... 701-437-2507  
Lois Gangnes (son, 24 - accident) ..... 701-282-4083  
Nancy Teeuwen (daughter, 15 hours - illness) ..... 701-730-0805  
Mark & Hella Helfter (miscarriage & son, 35 - accident) ..... 701-235-9622

Love gifts must be received by the 15<sup>th</sup> to be included in the next month's newsletter. If you wish to give a love gift please complete:

Love gift given in Memory/Honor of \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship \_\_\_\_\_ Born \_\_\_\_\_ Died \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: By giving a love gift, you are giving us permission to include your child(ren) in our monthly birthdays and anniversaries.