



# The Compassionate Friends of Rochester, NY

March 2009

[www.tcfrochester.org](http://www.tcfrochester.org)



## Reflections on Grief by Pat Kennedy – TCF Rochester

### *for the Candle Lighting*

I'd like to think I could go back to once upon a time when grief was a word and not a sentence. But I know better. This once upon a time never existed except within the tightly controlled confines of my own ignorance. Grief hits. It hits hard. It isn't until it hits hard that we begin to understand what suffering is, the kind that can't be remedied. Only endured.

I'd like to think that I learned something some thirty-five years ago when our first born son died after only a few days of life. I still remember the anger. If I go back to certain places, I can still relive the bitterness I felt. I don't know how many years it took before I realized I just had to surrender to the inevitable, to let go, to let him be at peace so I could find some sense of peace. I had a real grudge against God. I thought I'd come to a point where I could forgive him for what he'd done. What I didn't realize until years later was that I'd come to a point where I could forgive myself for my own sense of failure.

I'd like to think that it wouldn't happen again. But it did. Not quite two years ago our daughter, a wife and a mother of four, settled onto the sofa one Sunday morning for a nap before the kids woke. She suffered a severe stroke. When her daughter couldn't wake her up, she was rushed to the hospital. Within thirteen hours, all we or anyone else could do was to disconnect her from life support and be with her as she died.

I don't know if there is a place to turn for relief when all you can manage is a shocked stare as you wander aimlessly within yourself across a field of sorrows where children used to play. I still draw breath. Life is all we know. I see life in the eyes of others. And in those eyes I can see the hurt I feel when they look off into some distance only they can see, and remember why we meet here. I have outlived a son and a daughter. I am obliged to live out my life as they have lived out theirs, to go on. And to go on means to accept the moments of anguish that loss will not let go of.

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But along the way, I learned something. I learned to take a hard look at the pain. The anguish. The sorrow. Somewhere along the way, I decided to let grief do what it had to do. I reasoned that the worst it could do would be to kill me. But grief carries a much sharper sword. It aims for the will to go on. It lays open wounds no one can see, and through them bleed the energy needed to give life meaning. Yet, when grief hits hard, at least I am aware now that I am climbing into the ring with death's twin. It isn't that it knows enough of me to batter me to the mat - it knows enough of every element of human nature to scorn the will of anyone who has dared to love another in this life and faces an excruciating goodbye.

And from the perspective of this one very little life, making its way through a world teeming with life, I begin to sense that grief, like its twin, is an illusion, a very powerful illusion. I hope one day to see these who have touched my days and given them meaning beyond my ability to put into words. Grief lands a punch and swears, "You never will." I lost a best friend. Grief lands another, "What good is friendship if only to lose it?" Our son died as an infant. I still visit his grave, and I still remember. Our daughter was thirty-five years old. A lot more to remember. And it seems everywhere I look I see some tangible memory of her intrinsic sweetness. Yet grief goes for my temples and wants to thrust it all into the misery of one day, one event, one overwhelming wave of sorrow, one goodbye.

Someone once said that the only way virtue ever appears on the face of this earth is in a mortal's attempt to stand up for what is inherently noble. I sense truth in this. It takes courage for us to believe beyond the pain. It takes courage to remember such deep friendship, a warmly sincere smile, a quick and witty sense of humor, a temper it would be wise to consider, a thoughtfulness rich and deep and sweet in words yet reaching beyond words towards the unspeakable mystery of love in so many countless casual acts of caring. Grief wants to swallow this treasure whole and leave nothing but the misery of an unfillable emptiness. We heal, but we heal slowly. We heal, but we bear the scars where a part of us was taken against our wills.

We feel pain, because we have loved. We remember, because we have loved. We wonder beyond our own unbelief if we may one day see again these kindred spirits who shared our very hearts. And we wonder, because we have loved.

I can only imagine the unutterable sorrow others have endured through these losses. When our daughter died, I felt some of the most intense pain I have ever experienced, shards of raw emotion so pitiless that death would have been a relief.

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*To receive this newsletter via e-mail please contact Steve Haupt at [shaupt1@rochester.rr.com](mailto:shaupt1@rochester.rr.com)*

***TCF Rochester Donations:***

*If you would like to contribute to our Compassionate Friends Chapter please forward your Love Gifts and Donations to The Compassionate Friends of Rochester at 130 Portview Circle, Rochester, NY 14617. Please make checks payable to The Compassionate Friends of Rochester, NY. Sincerest Thanks.*

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Yet, even in the midst of this, as I watched my own life fill with such confusion and senselessness that I didn't know if I could put one foot in front of the other, I sensed this place within me that the grief could not enter. I have no way to explain this other than to say that this is the place where I have believed, since that day, where love born, then borne away, dwells, unthreatened, untarnished, and unending. A place where I sense more now, through remembering my daughter's life, the presence of a son who lived only a few days. These lives live on because we live on.

So, while grief does what it has to do, I want to make the effort to remember why it arrived in the first place. If there had not been joy, if there had not been hard times to bear together, there would be little pain. Many times I have to force myself to step back and remember - remember the treasures these lives have been in our own. So many times, we learn the most from our most difficult decisions. When all is said and done, we still have the ability to choose. And it can be so tough to choose to focus on the treasure rather than the tragedy. But I've known my daughter for a long time. And this is what makes me wonder about the illusion. I have wished her such peace in her heart, beyond anything I could ever be able to give her. And she has wished such peace for me, I mean moments as ordinary as a phone call, where we could just wish the world to go away so nothing but the hope we held for each other existed. Well, this is what now sustains me, that the world has gone away for her, that all that exists now for her is that hope fulfilled - and I cannot believe that she wishes anything but the same for me. The grief can still tear me up, it still has to be endured. But I begin to understand, even through the darkest hours, that the anguish makes little difference if we truly believed in each other.

So I hope. And I light a candle in memory of her life. She loved candles.

We speak the simple truths of life plainly enough. But what is most dear to us so often remains hidden behind the cloistered walls of our deepest and most cherished beliefs - beneath our smiles, our small talk, sometimes even our tears.

We light these candles to light the way between our deepest hopes and prayers, and these loves of our lives we remember - to show what words cannot say, to speak with light what can only be spoken in silence.

### *Welcome New Friends*

At nearly every meeting we welcome new members to our group, always with mixed emotions. We are glad you found us, but we are so sorry for the circumstances that bring us together. We understand your pain; we hope our unconditional friendship and understanding will help you through your grief.

Attending a meeting for the first two or three times takes courage, but for many it is the first real step toward healing. It may seem overwhelming, so we encourage you to come to several meetings to give yourself a chance to become



## Upcoming Planned Events— Mark Your Calendars:

*Breakout Session—“Memorial tattoo”-at the March 24th meeting.*

*Annual Yard Sale—June 4, 5 & 6 at George & Joan Carafos' home—will need to gather items to sell*

*Annual Balloon Release—June 9th—save the date.*

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### February Donations and Love Gifts



*Carol Ann Britt in memory of Steven L. Britt*

*J. C. Kuitems in memory of Robert Kuitems*

*Mary Yacono in memory of Robert Anthony Yacono*

*Joanne and Ron Mix in memory of daughter Laura*

*Steve and Kathleen Haupt in memory of Christopher*

*Barb Silverstein in memory of Karen D'Amico*

*Ed and Jan Levy in memory of Kim Fitzsimmons*

*Anna Loeb*

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## **Chapter Information:**

### **Meeting Location:**

Lifetime Care Care  
3111 Winton Road South  
(across from Valley Cadillac)

### **Meeting Days for March 2009:**

Tuesday the 10<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday the 24<sup>th</sup>  
7:00 P.M. to 7:15 P.M. - social  
7:15 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. - meeting

### **Contacts:**

Linda Haines— 315-879-7739  
Cathy Spoto - 585-254-6983  
TCF Regional Coordinator:  
Jacquie Edwards-Mitchell 718-451-0814  
TCF National 877-969-0010  
or [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

### **Send news letter inputs to:**

Colleen Kohl at: [colleenkohl@hotmail.com](mailto:colleenkohl@hotmail.com)

## **Miscellaneous:**

### **Annual Garage Sale**

Joan and George Carafos will be hosting the garage sale at their home this year on June 4, 5, & 6. This garage sale is the major fundraiser for our group. Group members donate the items that will be sold at the sale. As you do your “spring cleaning”, please see if you have any items that you can set aside for this sale. Sign-up sheets to help set up, work, and pack up after the sale will be circulated at upcoming meetings. *Thank you for your support!*

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See Linda for TCF Bracelets (\$2.00) and Memorial votive candle holders (\$5.00)

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### **Rochester Chapter TCF Mission:**

*The MISSION of the Rochester Chapter 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.*

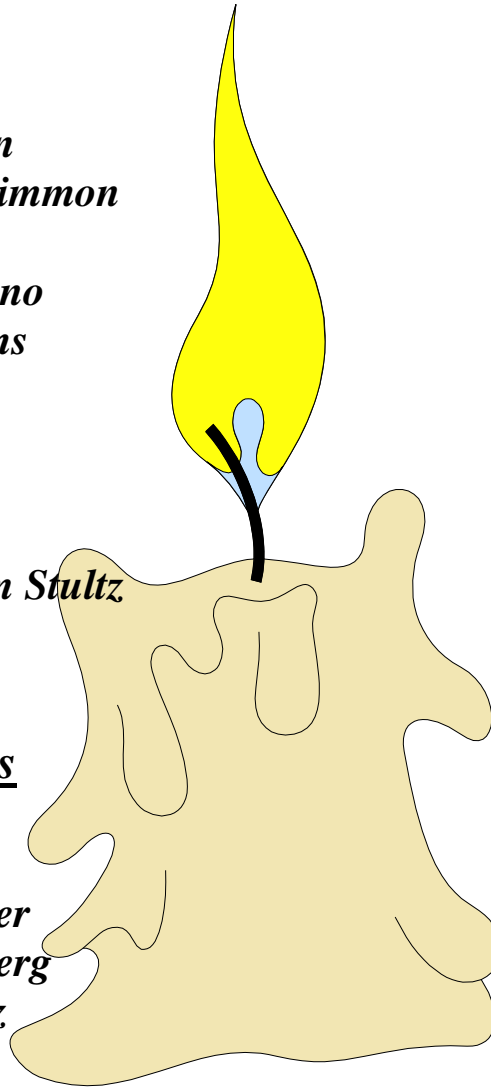


***Our Children Remembered***  
***March, 2009***  
***Birthdays and Remembrance Days***



***Birthdays***

***David Willmes***  
***Evan James Parkison***  
***Kimberly Susan Fitzsimmon***  
***Brendan T. Barry***  
***Robert Anthony Yacono***  
***Robert Joseph Kuitems***  
***Randall John Misita***  
***Joey Giardina***  
***Mark Buckenmeyer***  
***Molly Crye***  
***Robert "Rob" William Stultz***



***Remembrance Days***

***Douglas Outterson***  
***Jennifer D. Young***  
***Michael David Mueller***  
***Paula Mix Spanganberg***  
***Carrie Jean Kubarycz***  
***Jennifer Kennedy***  
***Stephanie A. Lagree***  
***Kevin Patrick Lynd***  
***Zackary Monroe McCarthy***  
***Evan James Parkison***

