



"To keep new lives living."

REFLECTIONS

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February 2005

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THE MEASURE OF HIS DAYS ...FROM A PARENT'S POINT OF VIEW

Debbie Gemmill c 2004

(reprinted from Getting Through Grief: From a Parent's Point of View)

The holidays are behind us. As I vacuum up pine needles and re-pack ornaments, I find myself looking forward to the New Year. It doesn't look much different from the old year—it's still in the 70's outside; the only real sign of a seasonal change is the blanket of leaves on the front yard and the mental list of resolutions I find myself reluctantly creating.

It's only the taking down of the old calendar that really marks the start of a New Year. The children gave me a beautiful new calendar filled with photographs of exotic orchids, and I am eager to hang it on the kitchen wall by the phone. The old calendar is dog-eared and water-spotted; its daily squares filled with color-coded notations of how we've spent the last year. I'm eager to replace its tattered pages with this gorgeous new one, but I won't throw away the old one just yet. I want to take some quiet time to flip through its pages and make notes about birthdays and special events to transfer to the new cleans pages of this year.



It was a couple of years ago, about this time of year, when filled with enthusiasm and dedication to begin the New Year in an "Organized Manner", we tackled the first of our many projects: the garage. John, legs dangling from the rafters, handed box after box to me with instructions to go through them, toss what we no longer

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A Note From The President



With the approach of a new year, resolutions for change seem imminent. Promises to make changes in ourselves, in our outlooks on life, or in our outreach to others. These changes can seem like lofty goals. How many of us have entered the new year with the best of intentions only to find ourselves setting our expectations so high that we have set ourselves up for failure before we even begin?

Instead, I suggest that you take a moment to reflect on your experiences during 2004 and select two or three areas that you would like to improve upon. Perhaps you would like to improve your ability to communicate more effectively with a significant person in your life or you might want to reach out to another grieving parent or family member who needs some comfort. By throwing yourself into a constructive project, you may find that your own healing process has been improved.

Angel of Hope Memorial Service

The third annual memorial service took place December 6th at the El Toro Memorial Park. There were approximately 300 people in attendance despite the cold and damp evening weather. Our special guest speaker was Shirley Zink whose son committed suicide on his 19th birthday. Sgt. Tara Robinson sang *The National Anthem* and *Amazing Grace* in full uniform. It was a moving tribute to our soldiers killed in battle in Iraq. The presentation of white carnations was the most powerful segment of the service. Parents, siblings, and other family members were given the opportunity to come forward and say



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REFLECTIONS

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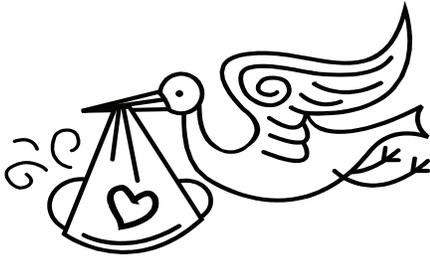
Reflections is a quarterly publication of the Guild for Infant Survival, Orange County—a non-profit organization. *Reflections* is committed to the collection and dissemination of accurate, up-to-date, scientific and lay information and the correction of misinformation related to SIDS. The Guild is dedicated to the support of families and friends suffering the death of an infant to SIDS.

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Newsletter Deadlines

If you would like to contribute an article or poem to an upcoming issue of *Reflections*, please contact: Cory Morinishi at (714) 952-1466 or e-mail him at shar-mori@comcast.net. The next Newsletter deadline is 4/1/05. We encourage your participation!



The STORK REPORT

Graciela Nicole Vara

Born April 1, 2004

Congratulations to Pete and Shirley Vara!

Is there a new little one at your house? If so, we would love to share your happiness. Please send all pertinent information to the Guild office for publication in our next newsletter.

THANK YOU

PACIFIC LIFE FOUNDATION

For supporting the Guild with a Grant to continue our Hospital Outreach Program.

Angel of Hope Memorial Service

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their child's name. There are now over 100 bricks that adorn the base of the monument. The inscriptions memorialize our children who left us too soon and remain forever in our hearts. We invite you to attend next year's service. It's a wonderful way to begin the holiday season. A safe haven in which to remember your baby where others understand your need to reflect on the life of a loved one taken too soon.

Ask The Doctor

This column offers our readers the unique opportunity to ask questions of a medical nature which will be answered by **Thomas G. Keens, MD**, Professor Pediatrics, University of Southern California School of Medicine/Children's Hospital Los Angeles and **Henry F. Krous, MD**, Professor of Pathology & Pediatrics, UCSD School of Medicine, Director, San Diego SIDS/SUDC Research Project, Children's Hospital San Diego. Please address your question in writing to either of our experts and mail to:

GISOC, P.O. Box 17432

Irvine, CA., 92623-7432

or e-mail to gisoc@compuall.net.

We thank Dr. Keens and Dr. Krous for being willing to volunteer their time and expertise in this way.

Peer Contacts and Support Group Facilitators Needed

Are you a parent, grandparent, family member, childcare provider or foster parent, affected by a SIDS death? Are you interested in learning how to help newly bereaved SIDS families? Then, consider being trained as a peer contact. We ask that interested individuals have experienced their loss at least one year before attending a training. Peer contacts who are interested in managing a SIDS support group are encouraged to be trained as facilitators. Training is provided through the California SIDS Program and training sessions and materials are free. Contact Barbara Estep at (714) 973-8417 or e-mail her at gisoc@compuall.net if interested in signing up for training.

**Self Care: Coping with
Compassion and Fatigue**
By Darcie D. Sims, Ph.D., CGC, CHT

Caring for someone who is hurting, regardless of the source of his or her pain, is a difficult yet wonderful task. It is truly an emotionally exhausting task, yet one filled with rich rewards and personal satisfactions. When we give the gift of ourselves, we risk being used, or being consumed by an ever needy world. Yet it is precisely that Gift of Self that is the most valuable of all treasures.

A most difficult part of becoming a helper is walking that fine line between being an outside observer and a participant in the drama of another human being's life. We must remain separate enough from others' distress to avoid being downcast by their depression, frightened by their fears or disturbed by their anger. There must be space in our closeness to one another. Because our heart knows no bounds, we must learn to set the boundaries between us and to integrate wisdom into our caring. We must tap into our own inner source of wholeness in order to help others find their own well spring of strength, compassion and capability.

Caring for others can be a source of tremendous stress or tremendous reward . . . the choice of what we see and experience is up to us. We can become immersed in the tragedies of the world and become old, tired and bitter or we can look through rose colored glasses and see hope. The choice is ours once we realize we do indeed have choices. In order to help others, we must first decide what our expectations are of ourselves, each other and those we seek to serve.

It is extremely important that we take the time to recognize our own expectations so we know how to measure our success. Success is measured by how close we come to what we expect, so be sure to become aware of what it is you want to accomplish by being a helper. In order to give the gift of ourselves, we must first know what it is we intend to give and then make sure there is enough to go around. We must find ways to fill up the empty well whenever it runs dry. We must learn to build support systems for ourselves as well as for those we wish to help. We must learn to support ourselves, too.

MEMORIAL DONATIONS

Donations have been made in the loving memory of the following babies by those who loved them:

In Memory of Bailey Downs

Mom's Club of La Habra

In Memory of "Baby Jake" Williams

Phyllis J. Edwards

Steve & Mary Williams

In Memory of Kaylee Billings

Lance & Lori Blake

A.J. & Lisa Billings

In Memory of Troy Michael Carnahan

John & Becky Carnahan

In Memory of Lincoln Mark Reeves

William & Lisa Pine

In Memory of Ivy

Chris & Julie Rommel

In Memory of Roger Tourkow

David & Carol Tourkow

In Memory of Reece Owen Oishi

Carolyn Doleshal

In Memory of Scotty's 15th Birthday

John & Becky Hogan

In Memory of Ian Russell A. Watson

Russell & Toni Hudson

In Memory of Jason Alexander Robar

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Agular

Mr. & Mrs. Alexander Shutz

Linda Howard

Mrs. Elmer L. Robar

Mr. & Mrs. Robert L. Robar

In Memory of Jon Craig Malcolmson

Gary & Jane Malcolmson

Helen M. Craig

In Memory of Lynne Trujillo

Gary & Jane Malcolmson

In Memory of Cory Eckert

Paul and Diane Gelormino

In Memory of Sarah Ashley Robbins

Iain & Margo McCormick

In Memory of Jamie Lynn Dow

R.H. & D.M. Mark

In Memory of Ryan Edward Faley

Robert & Leighann Faley

In Memory of Matthew A. Gaalswijk

Cornelius & Maria Gaalswijk

Pete & Liz Gaalswijk

BEWARE . . . of the Post Holiday Slump

Reprinted from The Benton Hospice Service Bereavement Newsletter.
Written by Mary Miller, M.S. LPC, CSC, Bereavement Coordinator, Certified Grief Counselor

It can happen in the best of our times. Our days were filled with list making and holiday shopping. With careful planning and preparation, our obligations were flawlessly carried out. The pleasant distraction of baking cookies, planning the meals, and wrapping presents has warmed our hearts. Now family and friends have bundled up their loved ones and started their journeys back home to their own lives. The house no longer smells of cedar boughs and fir needles. The holiday chaos has subsided and warm greetings have faded.

This can be the time when the familiar feeling of being alone begins to creep in again. At times it can be a peaceful feeling and at other times a feeling of being “let down”. The challenges of the holiday season and the dim promise of a happy New Year may leave us unprepared for the *post holiday slump*. You may have prepared yourself well for the holidays by carefully planning events and filling your days to allow a joyful time with family and friends. Now the New Year has begun and there may be little or no preparation for returning to a peaceful life without your loved one.

The same preparation you carefully applied to the holidays can be extended to these difficult days following the holidays or the *post holiday slump*. Give yourself permission to grieve and give yourself permission to enjoy life and your time alone. Continue to do those things that you found helpful in preparing for the holidays. Here are some suggested ways you can pamper yourself and encourage healthy and healing grieving:

- *Surround yourself with supportive friends and family members
- *Set aside time for your “grief work”
- *Do memory work; reminisce, look at photographs
- *Establish healthy daily routines
- *Identify the most difficult time of day and do something for yourself during that time
- *Eat right
- *Exercise
- *Volunteer and/or be helpful and supportive in other ways
- *Take a class or start a project
- *Continue rituals, old and new
- *Try new recipes and/or activities, or get back to your old favorites
- *Make lists and check off accomplishments
- *Be realistic with obligations and expectations
- *Keep a journal; write down your thoughts and feelings
- *Practice saying “no”
- *Be patient with yourself; you may still feel vulnerable
- *Give yourself permission to continue grieving

William Warden, a psychotherapist and researcher, believes that we begin to emerge out of the grieving process when we are able to reinvest in life and once again find joy in living. This means we still love the person and we still remember our loved one. It also means that we have found ways to take care of ourselves and have found ways to feel comfort and appreciation of all the “gifts” our loved one has left us.

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THE MEASURE OF HIS DAYS ...FROM A PARENT'S POINT OF VIEW

(Continued from Page 1)

needed or wanted, then label the outside of each one with its contents. We dove into our project with determination. Out with the old, in with the new. Who needs all this stuff anyway?

It went pretty well at first. We really didn't need two crock pots or an electric frying pan with no cord. It was pretty easy to casually toss the hamster cage and the fondue pot into the Give Away pile, and although the To Keep pile was much larger than the Give Away pile, we were still making progress and feeling fairly smug about our efforts. Down came another box which I opened with a certain amount of excitement. What would be in this one?

It was a mishmash of objects: half-burned candles, some winter mittens the moths had feasted upon, some carefully folded Christmas wrapping paper. I must have tossed all these items in this box some end-of-the-holiday season. Maybe each item had some special significance at the time, or maybe I was just impatient with the post-Christmas clutter in the house and filled up this box just to clear away some of the mess. *Well*, I thought confidently, *this box is easy. Everything goes!*

I quickly ruffled through it to the bottom just to make sure I'd found everything. There was one more item flat on the bottom. A calendar.

"What a lot of junk we've managed to save," I laughed as I added the calendar to the Throw Away pile. Why in the world would I have saved an old calendar?

The day went well. Exhausted and dusty, we congratulated one another on our new ability to be organized. The New Year was off to a wonderful start.

It wasn't until later that night that I remembered why I had saved that old calendar. It was from 1982. The year Tyler had died. I don't know why it wasn't in the chest that holds his other things. But there it was, in the pile of Things to Be Thrown Away. I rescued it, of course, and spent some time alone with the past.

There on its dog-eared, water-spotted pages was the life we had spent with our son. Some of the daily squares were filled with notes about well-baby checks, and play dates at the park or the beach. Jen's gymnastic lessons and preschool events were carefully noted. Most touching of all was the writing on the 22nd of each month, indicating Tyler's age by month. The last of those entries was on May 22. *Jennifer's fourth birthday. Ty's seven-month birthday.* Little did we know that just three days later he would be dead.

There were few entries on the squares that followed. A lot of things happened, I know, but somehow memorial services and relatives' visits did not need to be written down. I remember turning the calendar page from May to June, unbelieving that we could start a new month without our baby.

There were a lot of things that didn't get written down. When, for instance, was I able to get dressed before noon? When was the first day I didn't cry? What day was it that John and I realized we were going to survive?

The calendar marked many things that year. It told a lot about who we were, what we did, what we planned to do. Everything changed for us on that day in May: You could tell just by looking at the calendar. It was as if New Year's had come in late spring: we were now facing an entirely new life, with changes we'd had no time to prepare for, and certainly nothing to celebrate.

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THE MEASURE OF HIS DAYS ...FROM A PARENT'S POINT OF VIEW

(Continued from Page 6)

It was almost like looking at a calendar switched mid-year, belonging to two different families. The first happy, busy...the second empty, heavy with sadness. Looking back, I think those unmarked days, those blank squares which followed Ty's death, told even more about what was really happening to us. While it looked like nothing, those bold lines surrounding the empty squares were like thick walls that held pain and sadness, but also healing. Impossible to measure, impossible to gauge, slow and awful.

I looked through that old calendar for a long time. It seemed hard to believe that Ty's life was so short that it could be contained in a half of a calendar. Somehow it seems as if he was with us for much, much longer. There was so much *life* in him. He was, it seems, much more than the measure of his days.

Yes, I know. It's just an old calendar, I convinced myself, but it won't take up much room. I'll just stick it in this box.

It's still up in the rafters, a small record of a small life in a small family. Some other New Year we'll climb back up there, go through the box, and decide just how organized we need to be. In the meantime, I'll hang my new beautiful orchid calendar and enjoy its shiny, unmarked (for now) pages, and then I'll sit down with the old marked-up one and try to remember that it's more than just a measure of days.

BEWARE . . . of the Post Holiday Slump

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This may be your first holiday season without your loved one, or it may be your fifth, or your fifteenth. That sudden sensation can sneak up on you when you least expect it and leave you feeling empty and overwhelmed. This realization is a reminder that your life has changed in so many ways and that what was, is no longer, and that we did not choose this change. This is all part of a normal grieving process. This can be an opportunity to gain strength and to rely on our inner resources to become a stronger and better person.

Preparing for *the slump* can be the best way to begin the New Year with new meaning, new hope, new friendships, and a new life. Remember to be patient with yourself and that the *post holiday slump* is a natural and normal part of a healthy and healing grief process. We may spend a lifetime grieving the loss of a loved one; however, knowing that this grief can evolve into a deep richness allows us to heal and reinvest in life again.

“When you remember me, it means that you have carried something of whom I am with you, that I have left some mark of who I am on who you are. It means that you can summon me back to your mind even though countless years and miles may stand between us. It means that if we meet again, you will know me. It means that even after I die, you can still see my face and hear my voice and speak to me in your heart.”

~ Frederick Buechner, Whistling in the Dark

ANNUAL DUES

The cost to print and mail the *Reflections* newsletter is steadily rising. Therefore, it is important that we have your latest contact information. If the address shown on your newsletter is not correct, please e-mail Barbara Estep at gisoc@compuall.net or call her at (714) 973-8417 with your current information.

The annual dues of \$20 covers the cost of printing and mailing quarterly newsletters. Please take a moment to mail your dues in today.

Our current newsletter supporters:

- ◆ David and Linda Stahl
- ◆ Richard and Cameron Schmidt
- ◆ Stephanie and Christopher McConnell

From a Mother's Point of View

*The house is a bit of a mess, dishes in the sink.
I'm too old for this stuff, I'm already forty!
The car is not clean; the house is a wreck,
We've already spent last Friday's paycheck*

*The laundry always needs doing, the kids are too rowdy
And I never have time for a leisurely "howdy"
With all that I do, it's never enough
It's never quite finished, it always looks rough*

*I looked in the mirror and what did I see?
A harried old stranger, where I used to be.
The hurrier I go, the behinder I get.
Today is tomorrow and I'm not caught up yet*

*My kids are growing at such a fast pace
That I'm missing their childhood for the sake of the race
I work and I clean and I cook and I say
"Hit the books, clean your room" there's no time for play*

*Well, the Lord for some reason chose me with the care
Of six of His children but I'm rarely there
I've got to slow down lest there's nothing to show
For my role as their mom when they pack up and go*

*I'm only one person but look through my door
What appears to be one divides into more
I'm a chauffeur, a cook, a planter of trees,
A teacher, an umpire, a mender of knees.*

*Sometimes, I forget that deep down inside,
There's a lady with feelings and last night she cried
She gets tired and lonely, feels taken for granted
She wants to see blooms from the seeds that she's planted*

*Then amidst all the turmoil in this mind-bending pace
My little ones look at me square in the face . . .
And just when I need it, they all in one day
Say "momma, I love you" and then I'm okay!*

Anonymous

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Please print. Make checks payable to:
Guild for Infant Survival (GIS)
P.O. Box 17432, Irvine, CA 92623-7432



2005 MEETING CALENDAR

Parent Support Meetings– All meetings are from 7:00—8:30 PM.

*** Please RSVP to the parent host prior to the meeting**

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| March 8, 2005 | GISOC Office
2130 East 4th Street, Suite 125, Santa Ana
RSVP to (714) 973-9897 |
| May 10, 2005 | Elizabeth Broderick's Home
17564 Santa Paula Circle, Fountain Valley
RSVP to Mary Ann at (714) 403-1814 or (714) 973-8417 |
| July 12, 2005 | Home of Chris and Nancy Eckert
26501 Valpariso, Mission Viejo
RSVP to (949) 768-1813 |
| September 13, 2005 | GISOC Office
2130 East 4th Street, Suite 125, Santa Ana
RSVP to Lisa Billings at (714) 973-8417 |
| November 8, 2005 | Home of Lisa and Krist Biakanja
20732 Alicante Lane, Huntington Beach
RSVP to (714) 960-9897 |

Business Meetings– Business meetings are held at the home of Lisa Biakanja located at 20732 Alicante Lane in Huntington Beach. Meetings begin at 7:00 PM. If you would like to have an item added to the agenda, please contact Lisa at (714) 960-9897 or lbiakanja@earthlink.net.

April 12



**GUILD FOR INFANT SURVIVAL, ORANGE COUNTY
P.O. BOX 17432
IRVINE, CA 92623-7432**

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