

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Post Office Box 583 Taylors, South Carolina 29687
(864) 288-8342 www.tcfogreenvillesc.org

APRIL 2003

DEDICATION

This newsletter is dedicated to Ashley Michelle Brackett in honor of her 27th birthday on April 26 by her brother, Bennie and her parents, Lynda and Michael Brackett. Ashley was killed in an auto accident on April 8, 1998. Of course we miss her more with each passing day.

We have just recently found out that the following poem by Scott Heflin won a national award. He accepted the award in her name. Scott tried to get Ashley to stay in Boone that Wednesday evening, but she wanted to get home.

the breaking of easter

and the soldiers wove a crown of
thorns.
I felt like one of the soldiers placing
thorned crown
of goodbyes upon your head.
I should have punched you or broken
your legs,
but I withdrew instead (mea culpa),
something to delay your journey.

and forthwith came there blood and
water.
mixing like oil and water they bare
witness to your
misguided walk. so now you pass
this cross on to me. a cross of
mortality that
I am not ready to support.

he must rise again from the dead.
I await your resurrection to secure our
immortality. It's easter and you must
arise
because I have no time for faith now.
I keep expecting you to walk in
screaming, "peace be unto you."

*He best understands who has felt the
pain.*

SIGNS

Parents' words paraphrased
by Nona Walser

She sat with me, I asked, "How will I
know you from so far?"
She answered, "I've lots of souls to
save; you'll know me by my
heart."

I was calling to you through wishful
thinking and dreams,
When I saw the sweetest little red bird
flying along with me.

I was so confused, couldn't go;
couldn't stay.
Felt my boy's arm lightly around my
shoulder. He's OK.

I asked, "Please give me a sign, to
show me she's with You,"
Just then a shooting star crossed the
sky. . . and I knew.

I slept, my heart broken, my pillow
wet with tears,
My little girl laughed, she played with
toys; she's still near.

Tears run down my face, when I see
his friends play.
I felt him hold my hand, as he said,
"I'm OK."

The memorial service over, now alone
for a while,
I recognized the rainbow arching the
sky; her loving smile.

My mind is exhausted, my heart pains
all the time.
An angel appears, smiles at me, I saw
my child.

Working in the yard, a little bird
followed me.
I was aching for my son, could it
be?"

Hair of spun gold, skipping the paths
of heaven"

With Jesus as my savior, one day I'll
be with her, forever.

I'm desperate to see him or feel him
again.
Quietly I feel his presence, his touch
on my hand.

MONTHLY MEETING

Monthly meetings are such a
wonderful place to share with other
bereaved parents either during the
program or individually after the
program is concluded. Consider
joining us on Thursday, April 10th
at 7:30 pm at Pelham Road Baptist
Church, 1108 Pelham Road,
Greenville.

Directions: From I-85 take Exit 54
(Pelham Road) and go West for 3.2
miles. The church is on the left.

From I-385, take Exit 39 (Haywood
Road), go approximately 2 blocks and
turn right on Pelham Road. The
church will be approximately 1 mile
on the right.

COOKBOOK

Our Chapter cookbook is being
compiled by Charlene Vinson.
Submit your child's favorite recipe
and a very brief bio of your child to
Charlene at charlene.vinson@att.net
or to her home at 141 Hollywood
Drive, Piedmont, SC 29673.

WHEN...

When we finally realize that you
are always going to be smiling
and dancing in our hearts,
then, our pain shall turn to joy.

Bob Walters
TCF-South Lake Tahoe (CA)

A self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents

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OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

Ashley Brackett 04/26/76 – 04/08/98
David Bridges 08/25/82 – 04/07/00
Adam Cox 04/15/85 – 03/31/00
Eric Gow 04/06/71 – 11/04/91
Mark Jones 04/20/67 – 06/27/99
Eli Labbe 12/31/85 – 04/14/02
Elizabeth Warner 09/24/93–04/04/01

LOVE GIFTS

We acknowledge the following gifts with sincere gratitude and deep appreciation:

Sterling and Marguerite Dunlap in memory of their daughter, Jill
Baron and Lori Howell in memory of their sons, Robert Joel and John Baron

MY SECRET

Within days of my son's tragic death in a helicopter crash, it became my sad duty to remove his belongings from his apartment. In the numbing fog of shock and denial, I sifted through every drawer, cabinet, and closet. The wrenching decisions of what to do with his clothes, his video tapes – even his toothbrush – made my head swim.

Although I gave away many of the things to his roommate, other friends

and family, and to “Goodwill,” I kept the “special” things for myself – school yearbooks, pictures, certain articles of clothing, and his collection of crazy T-shirts. I put this strange assortment of things in his footlocker, a remnant of his boarding school days.

What I didn't tell anyone was that I never laundered the T-shirts I found in the dirty clothes hamper. I just folded them and put them in the footlocker with my other memories. And from time to time during those first months of agonizing pain, I would sit on the floor, open the footlocker and sort through the treasured remnants of a life that had been such a large part of mine.

Then I would take the unwashed T-shirts and bury my face in them, inhaling the combined scents of his cologne, deodorant, and perspiration, mixed with the wetness of my tears. It made me feel, for just a moment, that he wasn't really so far away. “What a perverse thing to do!” I thought, “I'm sure no one else would understand my doing such a thing – they would surely think I'd gone off the deep end.” So I never told anyone about this strange behavior and the odd comfort it gave to me.

Months later at a national conference, I heard a speaker tell hundreds of bereaved parents assembled about a mother whose son

had died suddenly and how she had refused to wash the soiled shirt he had been wearing, but found comfort in holding it close to her and smelling it. “My gosh,” I thought, “maybe I'm not so crazy after all.”

Since this experience I have discovered this is not as uncommon as I had once thought. The scents of a loved one are as much a part of them as the sound of a voice, the touch of a hand, or the tenderness of a kiss.

There is nothing “perverse” in wanting to cling to these precious memories. Memories are what remain after the death of our child, and there is comfort to be found in them.

Carole Ragland
TCF/Houston West Chapter

“Those of us who have worked through our grief—and found there is a future—are the ones who must meet others in the valley of darkness and bring them to the light.”

Rev. Simon Stephens
Founder TCF

26th TCF National Conference
Atlanta, Georgia
Hyatt Regency Hotel
July 4-6, 2003
www.tcfatlanta.org/2003Conference