



THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS



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Moline, Illinois 61265

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To those who are receiving our newsletter for the first time, we wish you were not eligible to belong to this group, but we want you to know that your family and you have many friends. We who have received love and compassion from others in our time of deep sorrow now wish to offer the same support and understanding to you. Please know we understand, we care, and we want to help.

You are not alone in your grief.

The Quad City Chapter



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FRIENDS

February 2011, Volume XXIV, Number 11

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Dear Compassionate Friends,

I often wear a heart shaped necklace set with three stones, one for each of our children. Our granddaughter is fascinated by my necklace, particularly the pink, rose zircon, that marks her father's October birthday. Each time we go through the litany. "The pink stone is for your Daddy; the green stone is Uncle Matthew's and the gold stone is for Aunt Anna." Not too long ago Hannah looked at me with sudden comprehension and asked, "Who is Aunt Anna?" "My little girl," I replied. Then, "Where is Aunt Anna?" "She lives in heaven with Jesus." "You mean she's dead?" (Nothing like cutting to the chase.) "That's right," I answered. With compassion in her young eyes, she said, "That's sad." "It is," I acknowledged. After a pause she asked again, "So she's in heaven?" "That's right," I responded. "Ok then." And that was the end of that conversation; we went on to other things. Someday we will probably look at Anna's pictures together and someday Hannah will realize that Anna's name is embedded in her own. Someday I will share with her how God saw us through those dark days and remind her of how blessed we have been as a family through the years. I am probably a different grandma than I might have been because of lessons learned through our grief and I hope that is a good thing.

But for us the reality is that our child lives on – in heaven and in our hearts.

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

If you read or write an article or poem which might be helpful to other bereaved parents, please share them with us, Jerry and Carol Webb, Box 71, Cordova, Illinois 61242.

If you move and would like to continue receiving the newsletter, please send us your new address. Because we send the newsletter bulk rate, the post office will not forward it.

If you know someone you think would benefit from receiving the newsletter, we would be happy to add them to our mailing list.

If you prefer to no longer receive the newsletter, we would appreciate you letting us know. Thanks, Jerry and Carol Webb (Editors), Box 71, Cordova, Illinois 61242, (309)654-2727.

Thank you to **Bethany for Children & Families** for printing this month's newsletter. If you would be willing to prepare the newsletter for the post office, please contact Jerry and Carol Webb (309) 654-2727.

Hope Defined - After my daughter, Rachael, died in 1992, my husband and I received a letter from the local TCF chapter. Rachael died in March; we went to our first meeting in July. We sat outside in the car, debating whether or not we were even going to go in. We wondered how on earth it could be any help to us in a roomful of people who were all so sad. But we did go in. We sat silent and shell-shocked - as I am sure so many of you did at your first meeting. But as the meeting progressed we heard other parents tell about their child and about how they were managing on their grief journey. We saw (and 2

I Cry

I cry in private. I cry alone. The tears are not always those warm and comforting ones that bring solace. They sometimes are those of anger, of shouting out against injustice and the sore trials of life, sometimes those of self-pity. They are sad tears and angry tears and even tears of joy. I do not often share them with the world.

But tears there are. Whether public or private, tears are an honest expression of grief. They are God's gift and not to be denied.

In my tears and in my grief, I question and search and grow. I cannot do it with dishonesty and denial. God is in my tears and in my sorrow as well as in my joy and my hope. He is there to shower down His love in abundance to ease and soften the pain, even in my foolish rage.

Do not ask me to deny my tears. Allow them to wash my inner wounds and speed the healing of my heart. I claim the privilege of tears, for God has not asked me to do otherwise. He has promised to be with me always, also in my tears.

Joyce Otten, TCF/Colorado Springs, CO

felt) the encouragement members gave to one another.

I don't remember a lot of details about that first meeting, but I do remember thinking as I saw and listened to those who were two, five and ten years down the road on their grief path, that somehow this monstrous event that had overtaken our lives must somehow be survivable, and that these caring people would help me find my way back to life. That night they lent us some hope, and that was a gift beyond measure.

Susan Chan



This is the choice we grievers always have. Our precious things have gotten out of our hands and our lives have been broken and weeping is utterly, utterly appropriate; but there comes a time that we either live the rest of our lives in sadness and anger and resentment, or we find by the courage that God gives, and the companionship of compassionate friends, that we do have the strength to stoop over, pick up the pieces, and see what we can make of what is left.

The Reverend John Claypool

A Lesson in Grammar

When your child dies, you soon find yourself back to the basics of English grammar. The question of present, past, or future tense takes on added importance and a new conjugation moreso than in elementary school.

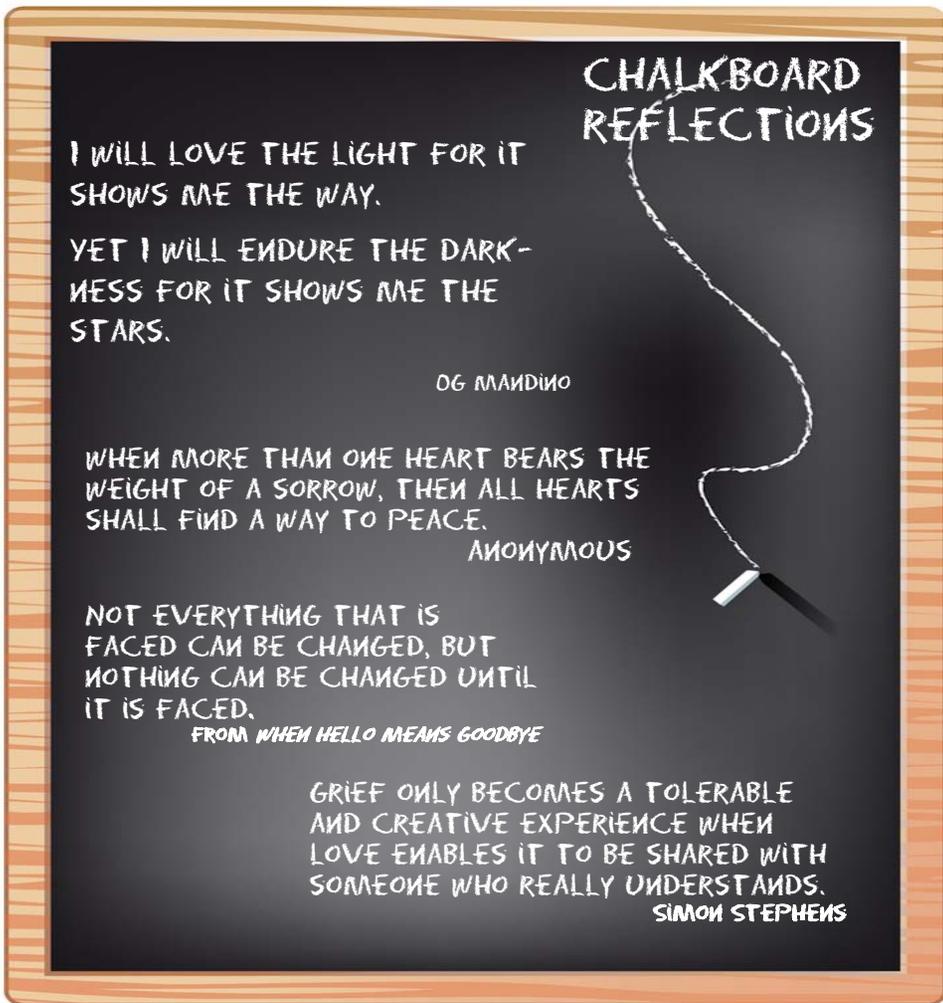
The familiar "I am" loses its identity, for you find you no longer know who "I am." It is all much more complicated because your present "here and now" suddenly became your past; "is" immediately became "was." Most of the time you find yourself vacillating, not quite sure what the reality of your situation is since the present with its void hurts, the past with its memories hurts, and you can't see much future in your future. There seems no place to hide.

When you have had time to do the painful, but necessary, work of creating a life that doesn't include your dead child, you will find once again you will have three distinct areas in your life - a present that has less pain in it, a past whose memories now offer comfort, and a future that offers some opportunities for pleasure and happiness. Granted, they will differ from what once was, but they are there, nonetheless.

In the meantime, if you're like me, I don't want anybody to quibble with me about whether my son's birthday is or was November 20th, because (a) it is, and (b) it was, and (c) it always will be. And, as to whether I have or had two children, (a) I do, and (b) I did, and (c) I always will have.

You deserve to know the answer to today's pop quiz in English grammar. You may choose (a), (b), (c), or all of the above, and I promise the people who really matter won't mark you wrong, no matter what your choice. So, with that out of the way, we can move on to some of the more important courses - like resolving your anger and/or your guilt, for starters. You'll have your Masters in those before we're finished.

Mary Cleckley, TCF/Atlanta, GA



**National TCF Conference
Shining Stars – Guiding Hope**

Minneapolis/St. Paul
July 15-17, 2011

For more information, see

www.thecompassionatefriends.org

**Regional TCF Conference
On the Wings of Hope**

Crowne Plaza Hotel Omaha, Nebraska
April 1-2, 2011

For registration forms and more information, see:

www.thecompassionatefriends.org



Grief materials

Looking for a particular grief book? Look no further than the Centering Corporation, the official recommended grief resource center of The Compassionate Friends. With the largest selection of grief-related resources in the United States, Centering Corporation will probably have just about anything you're looking for – or they'll be able to tell you where to find it. Call Centering Corporation for a catalog at (402) 553-1200 or visit their Web site at www.centering.org. When ordering, be sure to mention you are with The Compassionate Friends and all shipping charges will be waived.

Love Gifts

There are no dues or fees to belong to TCF. As parents and other family members find healing and hope within the group or from the newsletter, they often wish to make a Love Gift to help with the work of our chapter. This is a meaningful way to remember a beloved child.

Thanks to:

Bill and Laurie Steinhauser, in memory of their daughter, Maggie, on the 6th anniversary of her death.

Love gifts are used to provide postage for the newsletter and mailings to newly bereaved families. Some of the love gifts are used for materials to share with first time attendees at our meetings or to purchase books for our library. Our thanks to the many families who provide love gifts so that the work of reaching out to bereaved parents and families can continue. If you would like to send a love gift, please send it to our treasurers, Larry and Joyce Molitor, P.O. Box 191, Cordova, Illinois 61242. Checks can be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. Your gifts are tax deductible.

Our Newsletter

For parents who have experienced the death or deaths of multiple birth children during pregnancy, at birth, in infancy, or in childhood, contact Jean Kollantai at P.O. Box 91377, Anchorage, AK 99509.

Looking for more articles or previous copies of this newsletter? Go to www.bethany-qc.org for copies of the last four years of The Quad City Chapter of The Compassionate Friends Newsletter. They are download-able in Adobe Acrobat format.

Amazon.com

When making a purchase from Amazon.com, enter through the link on the home page of The Compassionate Friends national website, and a portion of the purchase price is donated to further the mission of TCF. This donation applies to all purchases, not just books, made from the Amazon.com site.

Healing Does Happen

Parents sometimes ask, “Does it ever get any better?” From my own experience and that of many parents to whom I’ve talked, I can truthfully say, “Yes, it does.” However, it takes time, and it takes work.

When our daughter died, the pain was almost physical at first. I thought of her all day, every day. I found that what helped me most was keeping busy, not trying to take in the finality of it all at once, receiving the support of friends, family and church, and my believing that our daughter was now with God. I tried to concentrate, as time progressed, not on what I had lost, but on what she had gained.

I felt in my grief that it was a choice of being over-controlled or out of control, so I decided to choose the former. From my present perspective, I think this was a mistake. Our family, I think, would have worked through our grief in a better way had we been more open with each other about the grief we felt. I think that many of the problems we faced after our daughter died were really due to our grief which was unrecognized and unresolved because it was unexpressed. It was compounded by the earlier grief of our infant son, who had been born prematurely and for whom we had not been encouraged to grieve fully when he died.

At that time, fourteen years ago, we were not aware of any guidelines for the grieving parent. It was difficult to find the sense of direction that some excellent books on grief now offer. I have learned more about grief and the grieving process in the almost three years of involvement with the Compassionate Friends than I had in the previous eleven. Slowly, however, we did begin to heal. Memories, even happy ones, at first had been only painful; now they began to bring some smiles. From sorrow and regret we moved to acceptance.

Life is different; we are not the same people. But we are happy again. We have been fortunate in the birth of our son, who is not a replacement for our other children, but who does help us feel more like a family again. We now are more appreciative of the time we have together and do things we might earlier have put off until “someday.” Of course, we have times when we become irritated or upset with each other; family life often can lead to some friction. But we also realize that minor irritants are not major problems.

The sky we see is no longer the leaden grey of grief and has not been for many years. This is not to say we never have an unhappy moment. Our children have died; we will always regret this and wish it were not so. But now we deal more with the memories of grief, rather than grief itself. Our sky is blue although there still is, as Father Ken Czillinger expressed it, a small puff of cloud that will always remain. Our lives are different now but happy. My wish for you is that this will soon be true for you as well.

Barbara Cook, TCF, Birmingham, AL

The Promise

Cold winds blow across the frozen pond.
Snow lies deep upon the fields.
But the change has begun.
Daylight hours increase slowly,
With each passing day later sunsets are more apparent...winter is ending.
For bereaved parents, the change is awfully slow.
The progress is not always apparent,
but the promise is the same.
Winter will end.
Spring will return.

Betty Stevens – TCF/Baltimore, MD

ALONE

Sitting alone on the beach
I listen for any signs
That you might be near.
I close my eyes and imagine
That you are sitting next to me,
I smile, you smile –
It feels good to be together.
A squawking gull
Jerks me back to reality.
I open my eyes and look
Towards Heaven
Which is now your home.
I sigh and wonder what you see.
I get up, dust myself off,
And leave like I came – ALONE

Angela Rosales, Bereaved sibling,
TCF/Abington, PA



What's it all about?

The Compassionate Friends is a nonprofit, self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families in the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child and to provide information and education to help others be supportive.

Founded in England in 1969, the first U.S. chapter was organized in 1972. Since then, 635 chapters have been established. The current Quad City Chapter was formed in 1987.

TCF National Office

P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, Illinois 60522-3696
Toll Free (877)969-0010
TCF National Web site —
www.compassionatefriends.org

Mission Statement

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

The Quad City Area Chapter of The

Compassionate Friends meets on the fourth Thursday of the month in Rock Island, Illinois. See the newsletter for schedule.

Quad City Chapter Newsletter Editors

Jerry and Carol Webb
Box 71, Cordova, IL 61242

e-newsletter is now available from the National Office! The monthly e-newsletter will contain notes and happening of interest to all TCFers. To subscribe to the e-newsletter, visit the TCF National Web site home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter Link. This newsletter is available to everyone.

Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends of the Quad Cities Monthly Meeting: Thursday, February 24, 2011 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm

Bethel Assembly of God Church, 3535 38th Ave., Rock Island, IL
For information and directions, call

Rosemary Shoemaker (309-441-5586) or Michelle Cauwels (309-644-0486).

From John Deere Road – follow the signs to Rock Island, turn right at 38th St. (by Kmart) and go up the hill. Turn left on 38th Ave. The church is on your right. We meet in the downstairs fellowship hall. (Or you can turn into the church driveway off of 38th St.; the church is on the west side of the road.) Next month: March 24, 2011 at 6:30 pm.

The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine	Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the George M. Wittich-Lewis Funeral Home, 2907 Mulberry, Muscatine, Iowa. Chapter Leaders are Linda and Bill McCracken. You can call them at (563)260-3626 for directions or information or contact them at linmac67@machlink.com
Helping Heavy Hearts — Grief Support Group	Meets the second Tuesday each month at 7:00 pm in the office of Family Resources located in Building 9 of the Annie Wittenmeyer Complex off Eastern Avenue in Davenport. Please call ahead to verify the meeting location. Contact Kirby White at (563)271-5908.
Mom's Group meets in Aledo	A group of moms who have had children die meet once a month in Aledo to support and encourage one another as they go through the grief process. You are invited to join them at 12:30 on the third Saturday of the month at 403 SW 10th Avenue, Aledo. For directions or more information, call Kay Forret at (309)582-7789.
Rick's House of Hope	Located at 4867 Forest Grove Drive in Bettendorf, this is a community resource is for children and adolescents dealing with grief. "Children and adolescents experiencing grief and trauma often need a safe place to express their feelings. They need companions for the journey of grief who are outside their family and not themselves grieving." The volunteer mentors at Rick's House of Hope provide this for young people and their families during painful and confusing times of grief. There is no fee for services. For more information, call (563)324-9580 or (563)421-7970. Find Rick's House of Hope on the web: www.genesishealth.com — keywords "children and grief."
Quad City SHARE	A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the first Thursday of each month, 6:30 pm, in the Wallen Room at the Larson Center next to Illini Hospital, 855 Illini Drive, Silvis, IL, and the third Thursday at 6:30 pm in the Adler Room # 1 in the lower level of Genesis Heart Institute, 1236 East Rusholme Street, Davenport, Iowa. Questions? Contact Chalyn Fornero-Green at (309)373-2568 or chalyn@shareqc.com or www.shareqc.com
Survivors of a Suicide Loss Support Group, Moline	For those who have lost someone to suicide, this group, facilitated by a peer survivor and a professional, meets the third Monday of odd numbered months in the Moline Library, 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm. For details, contact Joel M. Moore (309)235-7174 or gcsos@yahoo.com .

A Fitting Tribute

Come the darkness of new winter
We huddled together in frozen disbelief
Lowering your precious vessel into cold unfeeling earth.

No birds sang nor shone the sun to cast mocking shadows on our despair.

A light went out in the world that day
Leaving us to shiver in the blackness of your absence.

Four seasons of our sadness have passed since that bleak day

And now we return to put cold stone above your head.

It does not seem a fitting monument for a man of joy.

Too many tears have been shed. I weep no more.

Others may not believe, but everyday your spirit comforts me.

Your voice still speaks within my heart.

And while I may long for the warmth of your hands on my shoulders,

I can feel you're working in God's plan.

I believe with perfect faith that no loss is forever.

Today I come to bury my grief

Tomorrow may we rejoice that you have lived and loved us?

Erecting a monument of joy in life's celebration

Singing a eulogy of love for the broken-hearted

Lighting an eternal flame of hope for those in despair.

In your loving memory let us seek to perfect the world

And in so doing, perfect ourselves.

I believe with perfect faith that you are forever.

Your body may lie in this sorrowful ground

But your spirit soars with eagles

Still rages at injustice, reaches out in loving kindness,

Dances with the ecstasy of life that never ends

And laughs, deep in the belly, to cleanse us of our mortal sadness.

Judy Gradford, Bereaved Sibling, TCF/Rochester, NY

We are alike; at the same time we are very unlike. Our stories are different, our solutions are different, our ways of handling our grief are different; but we are alike in that we all hurt to the depths of our capacity to hurt, we experience many of the grief symptoms alike and we are alike in our need for help. While we cannot give each other definite answers or take away each other's pain, we can help each other by simply being there and listening to each other.
Dennis Klass TCF/ST. Louis, MO



Grief is like the wind. When it's blowing hard, you adjust your sails and run before it. If it blows too hard, you stay in the harbor, close the hatches and don't take calls. When it's gentle, you go sailing, have a picnic, take a swim. You go wherever it takes you. There are no bulwarks to withstand it. Should you erect one, it will eventually tire of the game and blow the walls in.

Barbara Lazear Ascher

Breadcrumbs

by Bill Steinhauser

On February 15, 2005, my daughter, Maggie, went happily off to kindergarten, a healthy six year old. At 2:00 pm, she suffered an unsurvivable intracranial hemorrhage. She died 44 hours later when life support was withdrawn from her 50 pounds and 50 inch-long barely-used body. My wife and I cradled her in our laps as together we held our daughter for the last time.

Six years later, her toothbrush sits next to mine in the bathroom; her bike is still in the garage as if waiting for her to ride it; the red-hooded winter coat that she wore on her last day of school hangs in my closet; her beanie-babies and stuffed animals lie in a heart-shaped basket in our bedroom (including the horse that I purposely mistook for a dog and which became a long running daughter-dad game of teasing:

“Maggie, get your dog out of the family room.”

“Daaad! It’s a HORSE!!!”)

In the basement underneath the stairs in three pink storage bins are some of her clothes that we could not part with. Her bedroom was long ago re-assigned to Luke, her best friend and closest brother. She would be appalled at what he’s done with it. Not the mess, mind you, just the guy stuff. In the living room her kindergarten picture hangs alongside those of her

brothers, theirs having been changed six times over; hers seemingly frozen in time, forever six years old. In the kitchen, her sippy cup. She had long outgrown it, but it was the centerpiece of another of those daughter-dad games. At day’s end, I would sit on the side of her bed and ask her how the day went. When she was done relaying all the news of the day and we had prayed the one prayer she had memorized (Angel of God), I’d give her a kiss and start heading for downstairs. Invariably, she would call out, “Would you tell Mom to bring me a cup of water?” It was the opening line of the game we played every night. I would interrupt Maggie at the word “tell” and insert “ask.” She would correct her question and wait for me to turn to leave. She would call after me, “...in a sippy cup?” As the weeks of this game went by, Maggie starting adding to it: “...with ice cubes?” “...and a slice of lemon?” It was typical Maggie, always pushing the limits around her, testing what could be done and what could not. She left us before we wore out the game.

In my car is a CD of songs that helped me heal after she died. When I need to be with her again, I play the disc on the long rides to Chicago. My favorite is Billy Joel’s “Lullaby,” and I see Laurie and me holding her in our laps as we rocked her from this life to another.

*Like a boat out on the ocean,
I’m rocking you to sleep,*

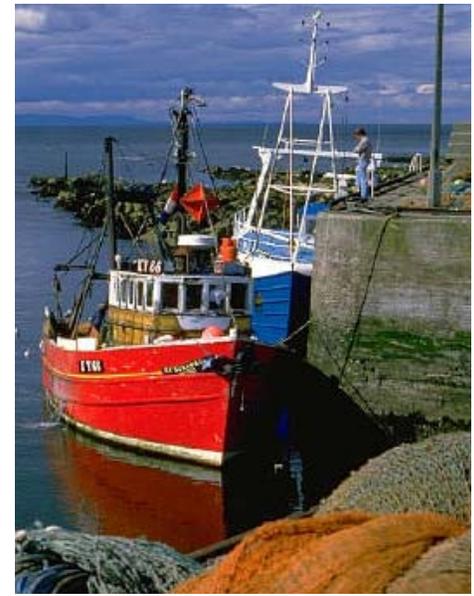
*the water’s dark and deep,
inside this ancient heart,
you’ll always be a part of me.*

Kenny Chesney’s “Who You’d Be Today” calls to mind all of the future moments that we were supposed to have but lost on that bitterly cold blindingly-sunny day in February. “Amazing Grace,” by Judy Collins, echoes the hymn sung as her three brothers and her parents walked her casket out of the church.

February 2011 marks the time as greater *without* her than *with* her. In the six years since she died, we have healed as a family and as individuals. The terrible pain of living with a broken heart has passed into the dull ache of always missing her. Our three boys have grown into fine young men. Laurie and I suspect that the boys’ memories of their sister have faded like old photographs left in the sunlight. Perhaps that is why, alike to other parents who have lost a child, scattered throughout our home and our lives, like breadcrumbs in the forest, are those things that bring us back to her, back to those sacred memories, reminding us of whom we’ve lost and long to see again one day, lest we forget.

*Goodnight my angel, time to close
your eyes and save these questions
for another day.*

*I promised I would never leave you
and you should always know where
ever you may go, no matter where
you are, I never will be far away.*



Please Just Tell Me You’re Sorry

“I’ll never forget the first time I visited my grandfather after the miscarriage. He held out his arms to me and sang in his cracking, near-90 voice, “God will take care of you, through everyday, o’er all the way; He will take care of you, God will take care of you.” Instead of attributing my pain to God, he offered me God’s loving strength and peace as the only real solace in the storms of life. My grandfather had learned through his lifetime that God is “the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God (2Cor. 1:3,4).”

Sandy Sheppard, *Moody Magazine*,
July/August 1995