

Dear Family Members,

After the January newsletter went out I recalled a conversation I had with a friend of mine a couple of days before New Year's Eve. We've been friends for a while and have "done life together". I hope you have at least one person in your life like my friend. That would be someone you can trust, be very honest with and know without question that you are looking out for each other. Someone that you don't have to preface everything you say with, "I hope you understand" or "I hope you don't take this wrong" or some other "PC" phrase that is so pervasive in our society now. We were talking about 2018 and some of the challenges of the previous 360 plus days. And then my friend said something that most of us have said at some point, including me, as one year draws to an end and we look at the next set of 365 days. My friend said, "I can't wait for midnight for this year to be over and for the new year to start." For some reason out of all the times I've heard and said this casual statement, this time I stopped. My default is that this is a kind of a "surface" statement without much thought or "substance". What caught me was that for the first time I had a visual image of this. In my mind I saw, in military time, 23:59:59 change to 00:00:00. It wasn't the image of the iconic crystal ball in New York City's Times Square dropping down; it was the digital change of 1 second and 1 second only. While that change happens every day for some reason, maybe because of it being the beginning of a whole new year, it takes on greater significance. To me it was the representation of how quickly things change in life. I think that's something we all can relate to. One second we have our loved one and with the change of the 1 second we don't and so much changes in that 1 second. We have a whole different life now. We're trying to figure out how do deal with that 1 second change. It can take years to do it and work through the "now what's".

I think the 1 second from 23:59:59 to 00:00:00 that happens every day is important, too. It means we have a new day... a new beginning. For those who have recently become a part of our TCF family, a new day just means one more day without your loved one. That's what it meant to me. Another no purpose, pain filled day spent crying and without my daughter, Ashley. There was no thought of great anticipation of making the new day better than the one that just ended. I was stumbling from one second, one heartbeat to the next. I think we all do. As the years passed, the journey very slowly changed. I went from crying all of the time to crying most of the time to crying some of the time to crying occasionally to crying rarely. Can you relate to any of that? Please don't misunderstand. That in no way means that I don't miss Ashley. Seventeen years later I do and I always will. It just occurred to me that I made one of those "PC" statements I mentioned before. I feel the need to "explain" because of not wanting to give the impression that I've forgotten my daughter with finding a new and additional purpose and direction. I'm sure that I'm not the only one that has done that. It almost seems like we're saying to not hold it against me or judge me because my heart is healing. And that's what it can be, the healing part of our journey. Somewhere along the way the grieving journey *can* turn to a healing journey with hard work and dedication. Hopefully the healing journey can be done without feeling the need to apologize, without feeling guilty because of it or having to explain it but often we do. I can't recall exactly when it changed for me. Maybe it was when I was asked by Michelle Backe and Michelle Pooner to be Chapter Leader, for the first time, along with Sharon Calvano three years into my journey. But, there had to be changes that they saw leading up to that question. Maybe the way to look at it is that it happened, as one friend said to me, "little by little all at once". It's like that slow direction change of the ocean liner. You don't feel it while it's going on but all of a "sudden" you're heading in a new direction. You may not have been aware of it while it was happening but, well, here you are. If you talk to others about their change, if they would admit to it, they may say the same thing.

So often we're more willing to talk about our grieving than our healing or that our grief is changing and things being "different" even if it's just a little bit. Let's say we change that now. Even if it's something little that you can do now that you couldn't do early on. Please share, with no apology necessary, your healing heart story with your other TCF family members. Send them to [Newsletter@BaltimoreTCF.com](mailto:Newsletter@BaltimoreTCF.com). Maybe it will help you find peace on your journey and help someone else find theirs.

The clock has changed from 23:59:59 to 00:00:00. What has that 1 second meant to you? What healing choice have you made?

Garrett Tollenger  
Chapter Leader



*The  
Compassionate  
Friends*  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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February 2019

NEXT MEETING: WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 6, 2019  
MARCH MEETING WEDNESDAY MARCH 6, 2019



THIS EDITION OF THE GREATER BALTIMORE CHAPTER NEWSLETTER  
IS SPONSORED BY:

WILLIAM ERMATINGER AND HIS WIFE MARY JEANNE  
IN MEMORY OF

FRANCES KATHLEEN "KATHY" ERMATINGER.  
DECEMBER 16, 1959 –MARCH 9, 1967

An odd little memory: Kathy's brother John is an accomplished mountain /ice/rock climber (Mt Rainier, Mt Kilimanjaro). As a family we would often hike in Hinckley State Park near Medina OH (where the buzzards return every March 15<sup>th</sup>)

Along the way there would be little cliffs and without hesitation Kathy would attempt to climb them. Perhaps it runs in the family (but not to her brother Bill nor to me).

Just an odd little memory.

## Memories of a Life Together

The twenty years I had with my son Michael were awesome. We went on one great road trip after another, but what I remember most is that he was always such an excellent navigator. At seven years old Mike would be in the back seat of the car with the unfolded US road map and lead us better than any GPS ever could. Ditto for the NYC subway maps when he was in his teens. Airport navigation, train stations, bus stations... he was good. And he was always up for anything. We went to the Rock n Roll Hall of Fame and Carnegie Hall. We ate BBQ in Lockhart Texas, trekked and climbed through Pacific redwood forests, Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, saw a baseball game at Jacobs Field and the “green monster” at Fenway. We saw plays on Broadway and biked the streets of DC. Gosh I miss him.



Mike was such a fine young man, with a wonderful soul, kind hearted and engaging. He was an intellectual and a goofball. Growing up he played baseball for many years in Little League and took martial arts lessons and what he lacked in skill he made up for in heart. He loved team sports. Actually he loved being on the team more than the sport. I always knew he was going to be smart. At two years old while visiting Panama City Beach, Mike read a sign on the access road... “Do Not Pick the Sea Oats”. Even cancer could not deter that intellectual spark. Throughout his illness he learned and grew, earning a full scholarship to the prestigious Bill Gates School of Computer Science at Carnegie Mellon University in its inaugural year.

I cried many times writing down these memories. It is still painful. Six years have come and gone since Mike’s passing. It really does not feel that long, yet like an eternity. I feel I am healing but I still have setbacks. All of this is a vast improvement from where I started. This photo was probably taken in 2011, two years into a four year battle with cancer. We were in NYC visiting the Chinese medicine doctor and taking in a show. In the photo, Mike is chatting it up with one of the many wandering Elmos, holding a picture of Justin Bieber that he bought as a Christmas gift for his cousin Haley. Like I said, an intellectual goof ball who gave and received a ton of love in twenty brief years.

*Arlene R. Gioia, proud and loving mom to Michael Rosario Cretella.*

You don’t recover from grief. You manage it.  
Martia Lattanzi TCF of Fort Smith Arkansas

## PICTURES

Pictures, I set them out. I put them away – get them out and start to go through them filled with wonder that the daughter pictured there is no longer going to call or walk in the door or send a card filled with love and humor. Cards that brightened my day and made me laugh and always prompted me to call her and give her a big hug when she walked through the door.

Pictures, I get them out. I run my hand over her face lingering on her lips remembering “kissy face mom.” And suddenly overcome with grief pull that picture to me and I kiss her and tell her how much I love her and how very much I miss her – and then I look again, and see her eyes – eyes that sparkled and twinkled with mischief though at times filled with deep reflection. She was a sensitive intuitive young woman who possessed wisdom and insight much beyond her years. She “left us” when she was only 24.

Pictures. At times I hate them. They show me what I don’t have. They bring back memories of a time when Jody was healthy and happy. A time when life with her was a joy. I am not yet to a place in my grief – healing where I can remember those times very well. I’m still filled with memories of her illness, pain and death; and I’m still at the place that I want all of those horrible memories to be a bad dream, a dream that I will wake from hearing Jody’s voice calling me to come outside so that we can take some...pictures.

Patty Fallon  
TCF Central Oregon



Your heart will mend  
but it will be a different heart  
wear a deep and lasting scar  
be a more compassionate heart  
know life in a new and different way  
and understand the eternity of love

Nancy Green TCF Livonia MI

## MEL'S VIEW

### SAYING GOOD-BYE

I never said good-bye to Andy. I didn't know how to admit that he wasn't going to make it. So I never really said good-bye or talked to him about dying.

From the first day Andy entered the hospital, talking became difficult. I remember thinking that someday the doctor would call us into a room to tell us that Andy was dying. I always kept that fear in the back of my mind and never said it. At first, it seemed that it wouldn't be necessary because the first treatment appeared successful. After the first cycle, the doctor who eventually told us Andy was dying, talked about getting Andy back to the way he was so he could ski and lift weights.

At that time Andy and I talked about what he would do when he completed the treatments. Andy always felt that he would make it. I remember him putting his arm around me before he went into the hospital and saying don't worry, everything will be alright. He left a note for our daughter saying the same thing. He was scared but he also had faith.

My wife, being a nurse, was skeptical from the start. Andy often told her not to be that way. I remember his once telling her to "get with the program." Even when subsequent treatments didn't work, Andy remained optimistic. He always felt that the doctors would find something that worked and that they wouldn't let him die. Our daughter was also optimistic and until near the end, couldn't conceive of her brother not making it.

My wife often stayed overnight at the hospital, especially during the last few weeks. I think she talked to him about the possibility of his dying and she said that he was worried about the rest of us. He didn't want us to be sad, didn't want his room to become a shrine. And wanted us to give his skis, weights, and other belongings to friends and cousins who would use them. But then he would tell her that he didn't know why he was talking about such things because he wasn't going to die.

Prior to his illness, we talked a lot and often did things together. If we didn't have other plans, we went to a movie or took a ride in his jeep. We used to go look at new houses together and watch our new house going up. He was the same with his mother and sister. But, in the hospital, I often couldn't talk to him other than to offer support and be there. Sometimes I just didn't know what to say.

I feel guilty about not saying good-bye. But, fortunately, it wasn't as if I needed to say good-bye to make up for the past. The important thing was the sum of what went before. There are no regrets for the things we did together although in retrospect I wish we had done more. He was a part of our lives and very thing we did. Our past was filled with wonderful, happy, and sharing memories. Maybe that's why it hurts so. We lost more than a son and a brother. We lost a best friend and a piece of ourselves. And, besides, I still don't want to say good-bye.

Mel

# *Lifedates*

## February

## March

### Birth Days

### Remembrance Days

### Birth Days

### Remembrance Days

John Joseph Grandruth  
Delaney Marie Gaddis  
Lilyana Marie Juratovac  
James Patrick McElroy  
Mason Antonio Harrington  
Catherine Theresa Carnes  
Rozanne Storm  
Jaxxon King Thomas Haun  
Justin Thompson  
Kelly Kraft  
William Warren Pease, Jr.  
Patrick Kenny Dieringer  
Erik Pachino  
Ellagrace Ann Garrison  
Shawn Michael Fischer  
Carl Edward Palo  
Janice Biondo O'Neill  
Kenneth W. Link  
Garrett Daniel Staib  
Natalia Erin Miller  
David L. Murphy  
DeShawn Christopher Green  
Mason Griffin Medicus  
Reece Taylor Stevens  
Jasmine Daye Bishai  
Sallie Pattillo  
Marc Rory Goldberg

James Shmall Watts  
Larry Allan Samet  
Mason Antonio Harrington  
Zachary Wolfe Pressman  
Philip Michael Gardiner  
Edward George Kiesling  
Katrina Lenore Sevich  
Charlotte Rose Bohn  
Megan Ann Estey  
Brad Wisniewski  
Dominic Raymond Cordle  
Madison Summer Lynn Corcoran-  
Narup  
Shastri Mark Ali  
Earl John Kohlhepp  
Tylour Long  
Meghan Ann Murphy  
Devon Maryl Jagler  
Kenneth W. Link  
Garrett Daniel Staib  
Nelson Yargar, III  
Deborah Ann Tipton  
Kelsey Elaine Brown  
William Michael Hogan  
Dimitra Y. Whittington  
DeShawn Christopher Green  
Brian Speckmeier, Jr.  
Alexia Jo Bock  
Justin Matthew Gregg  
Chanda Leigh Painter  
James Walter Babcock

Jenna Marie Manuel  
Kyle Aaron Snow  
Britney Marie Grinder  
Tommy Bakie  
Sofia Francesca O'Loughlin  
Julian O'Neal  
Alexander Bertucci Hoehn  
Kyle Albert Greaver  
Jace Michael Davis  
Hayden Michael Hunton  
Jocelyn Chilvers  
Virgil Maupin  
Conor James O'Sullivan  
Austin Damond Remines  
Brandon Nowlin  
Lydia Shirazi  
Sarah Alexandria Hinton  
Margret Kelly Lane  
Casey Santana Butler  
Lance Locklear  
Deborah Ann Tipton  
Matthew J. Lewis  
Richard Frank Galentine  
Stephanie Sanzone  
Daniel Keith Richardson  
Steven Gregory Radford  
Angela Cheek-Barnett  
Martin Barry Sollien  
Christopher Stephen  
Michael Ryan Atkins  
David Franklin Howell, Jr.  
Alexia Jo Bock  
Angela Iyonna Amaya Jones  
Michael James McQuaid  
David Alexander Stratton

Jeremy W. Amell  
Brian Alan Basik  
Lilyana Marie Juratovac  
Jace Michael Davis  
Eileen Ernsberger  
Joseph Riley Armstead, III  
Dawn Marie Matthews- Melton  
Hayden Michael Hunton  
Kelly Bateman  
Daniel William Beckenholdt  
Rickey Donnell Henry II  
Kenny Klingmeyer  
Jonathan Paul Daily  
Charles Dean Saenz  
Jagger Lee Whisler-Crawford  
Kelly Nicole DallaTezza  
Diane Marie Isella  
Christopher William Diehl  
Robert William Biondo  
Ryan Michael Sheahy  
Michael Leo Swift, III  
Kathy Ermatinger  
Phillip Holmes  
Richard Frank Galentine  
Natalia Erin Miller  
Martin Barry Sollien  
Christopher Stephen  
Brennan Michael Doll  
Daniel Scottodifrega  
Christopher Gregory  
James Stallings  
David Alexander Stratton  
Sallie Pattillo

## *The Compassionate Friends 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

## *Siblings Walking Together* *(formerly The Sibling Credo)*

We are the surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends. We are brought together by the deaths of our brothers and sisters. Open your hearts to us, but have patience with us. Sometimes we will need the support of our friends. At other times we need our families to be there. Sometimes we must walk alone, taking our memories with us, continuing to become the individuals we want to be. We cannot be our dead brother or sister; however, a special part of them lives on with us. When our brothers and sisters died, our lives changed. We are living a life very different from what we envisioned, and we feel the responsibility to be strong even when we feel weak. Yet we can go on because we understand better than many others the value of family and the precious gift of life. Our goal is not to be the forgotten mourners that we sometimes are, but to walk together to face our tomorrows as surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends.

### The Sibling Corner

Our chapter meeting hosts a Sibling Group which coincides with our regular meeting time. There are so many special issues that occur when you lose a brother or sister. This group offers a safe place for you to share your challenges, concerns and successes when walking this path. Siblings age 16 and over are welcome and encouraged to attend. This will be facilitated by siblings for siblings.

# The Sibling Nook

## Dreams of my Brother

Amanda Greenwood

Every once in a while I'll dream of my brother. Immediately after his death I went through a period of dreaming of him often, and it brought me both comfort and sadness. I wanted to share a short blog I wrote three years after his death about a dream I had:

Last night I had a dream. I was at a bridal shower or party at my grandparent's old house. There were bits and pieces of weirdness. I was traveling in a car at one point, left my purse in another car and somehow ended up missing a teddy bear from my childhood. However, the part I remember most was hugging my brother. He was at the party at my grandparent's house and in the dream I hadn't seen him in a while. I walked towards him and he asked if I had grown taller. I slipped my shoes off and then he gave me a hug. I remember feeling happy because it had been so long since I saw him. He was smiling and happy.

When I woke up, hugging my brother was not the most odd part of my dream. I didn't even process that I couldn't really hug my brother until I told my fiancé about the dream. That is when it all became real. Even though the dream makes me sad, I am happy. I'm happy that in my dream I got to hug my brother and tell him how much I miss him.

## Dear Sibling

How can I possibly tell you how much I miss you?

But of course you probably already know – since you know me better than anyone

No matter how much time passes, I still wish you were here to share our lives.

And the future I expected us to have together.

Even though we fought and at times neglected each other, I just assumed that you would always be there. That we'd grow old together and remember stories of growing up

and laugh at each other as we looked and acted more like our parents.

Your death has rocked me harder than I could have imagined.

And at times I didn't want a future that didn't include you.

Ultimately, there are no answers to my questions:

There is no replacing you

And there is no solace for my grief. There is only the simple choice I make every day

To live on in the honor of your memory and the love we shared.

To strive to carry on the best of who you were

To cherish the brief time we have with others

To celebrate the opportunity to be alive

To have compassion for the pain of others as well as my own

To have the courage to love fully as I have loved you

And to remember that you would want me to go on and find joy again

You gave me many gifts while you were alive and I continued to discover the gifts in this loss. I am so thankful you were born my sibling I could not have traded our time together for anything. You are always with me because you are a part of me.

Melanie Lamourei

TCF Marin County, CA

In memory of my sister, Sarah Katherine Smith



## **The Compassionate Friends Online Communities**

I wanted to share something that is helping me on my grief journey – a Facebook group supported by The Compassionate Friends. I am a member of the TCF-Sibs group. I thoroughly enjoy belonging to this group and sharing with others on our grief journey. Facebook groups don't replace, for me, in-person meetings, but is a way to stay connected to others grieving. Most recently there was a discussion about getting a memorial tattoo, and I was able to share a photo of my tattoo and a bit about my brother. This type of sharing and exchange of ideas is what I love most about this Facebook group.

Below you'll also find information about the online chats. I utilized the live chat on days when I wanted to talk to others who understand, but it was the middle of the month and I knew it would be a few weeks before the meeting. I appreciate the time and dedication that The Compassionate Friends has invested in making sure these live chats are safe and appropriate environments for people who are grieving.

Amanda Greenwood

### **The Compassionate Friends Facebook Groups**

The Compassionate Friends offers a variety of private Facebook Groups. These pages are moderated by bereaved parents, siblings, or grandparents, and may not be accessed unless a request to join is approved by a moderator. To search for these groups, type in the exact name into the Facebook search function.

**TCF – Loss of a Stepchild**

**TCF – Loss to Long-term Illness**

**TCF – Loss of a Grandchild**

**TCF – Loss to Mental Illness**

**TCF – Sibs**

**TCF – Loss to Miscarriage or Stillbirth**

**TCF – Multiple Losses**

**TCF – Infant and Toddler Loss**

**TCF – Sudden Death**

**TCF – Loss of a Child 4 -12 Years Old**

**TCF – Loss to Substance Related Causes**

**TCF – Loss of an Only Child/All Your Children**

**TCF – Sibling Loss to Substance Related Causes**

**TCF – Grandparents Raising their Grandchildren**

**TCF – Loss to Suicide**

**TCF – Bereaved Parents with Grandchild Visitation Issues**

**TCF – Loss to Homicide**

**TCF – Loss to a Drunk/Impaired Driver**

**TCF – Reading Your Way Through Grief**

**TCF – Loss to Cancer**

**TCF – Crafty Corner**

**TCF – Loss of a Child with Special Needs**

**TCF – Loss of a Child**

## Live Chats

The Compassionate Friends offers Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing. There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions. We adhere to the principles of The Compassionate Friends.

The intent of our Online Support Community is to provide mutual comfort, hope, and support through conversation. We are not professional grief counselors.

The schedule and links for the live chat can be found on The Compassionate Friends website

[www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/online-communities/online=support](http://www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/online-communities/online=support)

## Thoughts on Valentine's Day

By Karen Nelson TCF Elder Chapter Utah

"How sad this day much be for you."

I read it in their eyes.

As if there's no more love

between us anymore,

You and I.

How wrong they are

they do not understand

the bond between a parent and child.

I do not have to see your face  
to remember your sweet smile.

I do not have to hug you,  
although if I could, I would.

I do not have to hear your voice,  
our love is understood.

Everyday I think of you,  
my thoughts are full of memories.

I realize that love does not end  
with death's painful goodbye.

I await with hope until  
we can say hello again,  
You and I.

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**Meeting Information**

The First Wednesday of the month at:  
Govans Presbyterian Church  
5828 York Road  
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7:30-9:30 PM

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**To Our New Members:**

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. We do understand.

**To Our Seasoned Members:** We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick. TCF is here to welcome you, share your grief and encourage you

THE GREATER BALTIMORE  
CHAPTER LEADERSHIP AND  
VOLUNTEERS SEND THIS  
VALENTINE TO ALL OUR FAMILY  
MEMBERS AND TO ALL YOUR  
LOVED ONES.

WE HOLD ALL OF YOU IN OUR  
HEARTS.

