

The Compassionate Friends Victoria, Australia

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Magazine Excerpts - Aug ~ Sep 2005

Hannah's Gift

I am sitting at my computer on 17 June, 2005, the evening before my darling's third anniversary, feeling as if I am traveling through her last night on Earth towards her death. She was killed riding her beloved motorcycle back to Melbourne, after giving motivational talks at three secondary schools in Bendigo.

How she loved to arrive in her leathers and helmet, and to remove the helmet and shake out her hair, revelling in the surprise and admiration when the 'audience' saw the beautiful girl emerge from her disguise. She particularly loved to turn up to auditions this way. I am told, making an entrance that was remembered. Every inch an actress, a born actress, a drama queen at times, she had been acting professionally since she was fifteen.

Often she used to say to me. "When are you going to start painting again Mum?" My output averaged one painting every two to three year; - in a good decade. Although I had never wanted to be anything but a painter when I was younger, life pulled me in other directions. Single parenthood and the need for a secure income kept me from devoting the serious time needed to develop my art. Meanwhile my career in special education was absorbing, and satisfying in many ways.

Everything changed on that horrific night of June 18, 2002. You all know the story - the worst nightmare that comes true, and from which there is no awakening.

Three and a half weeks later I went back to work. It felt good to act the "normal" me for several hours a day, though there were always those unexpected triggers that had me fleeing from company - like the staff meeting in which I read about the VCE Drama solo performance criteria - I remembered Hannah proudly telling me how she had made the examiner cry, with her monologue in the role of an immigrant Irish servant girl.

Three years later, I walked out of work one day after a minor tiff, and didn't return for three months. All the utter exhaustion of mind, spirit and body, all the ignoring of the soul's need to rest and grieve in solitude caught up with me.

By this time, however, something important had already begun. So many of Hannah's friends had talked to me about how she used to encourage them to follow their dreams, as she had done with such determination, battling manic depression. They felt that her death could only be given some meaning if they put fear and doubt aside, following her example. I felt as if I could hardly do less myself.

I found an art class and after a year's confidence rebuilding. I dare to think of myself as a painter. I can only work two days a week now, so I have time to paint - at last. I paint Hannah, or things that relate to her. When I am painting her she comes alive for me - I remember where even- freckle is and the changes in her sea-coloured eyes. In one of my paintings, I have pictured her holding the nephew who was born five months after her death.

Perhaps there are other parents who would like to have a posthumous portrait of their child painted, to make an unfulfilled dream come true, or just to honour and memorialise their loved one. Having received from Hannah the gift of recovering my art, I would like to offer it to others.

Maxine
Bereaved Mother of Hannah
9/8/77- 18/6/02
TCF Vic Aus





A New Beginning For Brothers & Sisters

We are honoured to introduce ourselves as the new editors of the siblings newsletter, Brothers & Sisters. It's a new beginning for the newsletter and also for us.

We're very privileged to be taking over from Joanne Millar and want to thank her personally for the love and care she has poured into each and every issue of Brothers & Sisters over the past five years. We hope to continue to comfort other bereaved siblings in the same way she has helped us.

Over the past years, Brothers & Sisters has given both of us a much-needed connection with others whose brothers and sisters have died. Hearing from other bereaved siblings who are experiencing similar emotions and thoughts has helped us to know we're not so alone and we're not crazy, let us cry as much as we want and believe that there will be bright patches and happy new beginnings in the future.

Brothers & Sisters is for your children - all of us who have experienced the death of our brothers and sisters. We want this newsletter to support all bereaved siblings, no matter how young or old, no matter what their situation. If your children are not aware of Brothers & Sisters, we ask that you share our first issue with them, so they know there are others who understand.

You may notice that we have moved to a new look' and format for the newsletter so we can present some of the ideas we have for making it as helpful as possible to all bereaved siblings. We are excited about the new beginning for Brothers & Sisters and look forward to including contributions from many other siblings in future issues.

Melanie Yong (Editor)
Karina Rasmussen (Assistant Editor)
TCF Vic. Aus



If you are a bereaved grandfather you may have special difficulty grieving the loss of a grandchild for two reasons.

First, your grief is minimized by people who don't consider a grandfather/grandchild relationship to be very significant.

Secondly, like most men, you have probably been taught to keep your feelings inside.

When a child dies, the concern of others is first for the mother, then the father, Occasionally some will be expressed for the grandmother. Rarely do people recognize that you are hurting too. When you weep or express pain, even among family and friends, your behaviour may be questioned. You may feel embarrassed. A grandfather isn't expected to be upset. He is expected to concern himself with his children and his wife.

Once I saw a grown man cry. "Now there goes a man with feeling!" said I. He was strong, able, quite well-built, with muscles, gray hair and charm to the hilt I moved toward him slowly and said, "What's wrong?" The look he gave me was tear-filled and long.

"I cry for a child. My grandchild has died."
So I sat beside him and two grown men cried.

By Margaret
From

'For Bereaved Grandparents'

Grief is a ceremony of lost
treasure,
Grief is the homage,
You pay to the love
you were once blessed to
share.
Grief is not the enemy.

Sascha