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*Wings*  
A Grief Education Ministry

*Honoring the Past and  
Rebuilding the Future*

[www.wingsgrief.org](http://www.wingsgrief.org)

*Published by Nan Zastrow*

## Contents of this ELetter

- Appreciate Your Transformation
- Lessons From a Spider
- From the Archives: Walk Beside Me and Be My Friend
- Rest In Peace Mr. President - William McKinley
- Grief Tip - Patriotic Holidays
- What Do You Think - Something Your Loved One Said or Did that You Always Remember
- Poems, Verses and Quotes
- On the Lighter Side
- Lists/Ideas: Suggestions to Help You Embrace Feeling Alone
- Cooking (NEW COLUMN) Cook It-For One
- Inspirational Story: Finding Joy

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## Appreciate Your Transformation

*By Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.*

The journey through grief is life-changing. When you leave the wilderness of your grief, you are not the same person you were when you entered. You have been through so much. How could you be the same?

Transformation literally means a change in form. Many mourners have said to me, "I have grown from this experience. I am a different person." You are indeed different now. You have likely grown in your wisdom, in your understanding, in your compassion.

This growth resulted from something you would have preferred to avoid. Though grief can indeed transform into growth, neither you nor I would seek out the pain of loss in an effort to experience this growth. While I have come to believe that our greatest gifts often come from our wounds, these are not wounds we masochistically go looking for. When others offer untimely comments like, "You'll grow from this," your right to be hurt, angry or deeply sad is taken away from you. It's as if these people are saying that you should be grateful for the death! Of course you're not grateful (though you may feel relieved if the death followed a long period of suffering). You would rather the person were still alive and well.

But the person isn't alive and well. He or

she has died, you are grieving and, I hope, mourning, and you are probably finding yourself a changed and possibly better person. To understand how transformation in your grief occurs, let us explore some aspects of growth in grief.

### **Growth means change.**

We as human beings are forever changed by the death of someone in our lives. You may discover you have developed new attitudes. You may be more patient or more sensitive to the feelings and circumstances of others, especially those suffering from loss. You may have new insights that guide the way you live. You may have developed new skills – learning to balance your chequebook or cook a nice meal.

You are "new." To the extent that you are different, you can say you have grown. Yes, growth means change.

### **Growth means a new inner balance with no end points.**

While you may do your work of mourning in ways that help you recapture some sense of inner balance, it is a new inner balance. The word growth reflects that you do not reach some final end point in your grief journey.

Not any one of us totally completes the

mourning process. People who think you “get over” grief are often striving to pull it together while at the same time feeling that something is missing. You don’t return to a previous “inner balance” or “normal” but instead eventually achieve a new inner balance and a new normal.

### Growth means exploring your assumptions about life.

A death invites you to look at your assumptions about life. Loss tends to transform your assumptions, values and priorities. What you may have thought of as being important – your nice house, your new car – may not matter any longer.

You may ask yourself, “Why did I waste my time on these things?” You may go through a transformation of your previously-held values. You may value material goods and status less. You may more strongly value relationships.

You may also find yourself questioning your religious and spiritual values. You might ask questions like, “How did God let this happen?” or “Why did this happen to our family?”

Exploring these questions is a long and arduous part of the grief journey, but can be life-affirming. Every loss calls for a new search for meaning, including a natural struggle with spiritual concerns, often transforming your vision of your God and your faith.

### Growth means utilizing your potential.

The grief journey often challenges you to reconsider the importance of using your potential. In some ways, loss seems to free the potential within. Questions such as “Who am I? What am I meant to do with my life?” often naturally arise. Answering them inspires a hunt. You may find yourself searching for your very soul.

In part, seeking purpose means living inside the question, “Am I making a living doing the work I love to do?” Beyond that, it means being able to say, “Does my life really matter?” Rather than dragging you down, your grief may ultimately lift you up. Then it becomes up to you to embrace and creatively express your new-found potential.

Until you make peace with your purpose, you may not experience contentment in your life. Joy will come when you know in your heart that you are using your potential – in your work or in your free time or in your relationships with friends and family.

I believe grief’s call to “use your potential” is why many mourners go on to help others in grief.

### Your Responsibility to Live

Paradoxically, it is in opening to your broken heart that you open yourself to fully living. Sorrow is an inseparable dimension of our human experience.

We suffer after a loss because we are human. And in our suffering, we are transformed. While it hurts to suffer lost love, the alternative is apathy. Apathy literally means the inability to suffer, and it results in a lifestyle that avoids human relationships to avoid suffering.

Perhaps you have noticed some people die a long time before they stop breathing. They have no more promises to keep, no more people to love, no more places to go. It is as if the souls of these people have already died. Don’t let this happen to you.

### Choose life!

Yes, you have to do your work of mourning and discover how you are changed. You have to live not only for yourself, but for the precious person in your life who has died – to work on their unfinished business and to realize their unfinished dreams. You can do this only by living.

I truly believe those who have died live on through us – in our actions and our deeds. When we honour their unfinished contributions to the living world, our dead live on. When we dedicate ourselves to helping others who come to know grief, they live on.

What if the person who died could return to see what you are doing with your life? Would he or she like how you have been transformed? Would he be proud of you? Would she believe that her life and death brought meaning and purpose to your life? Or, would he see you dying before you are dead?

What if he or she could see that you have mourned but also gone on to help others in grief and sorrow? What if he could see that he left his love forever in your heart? What if she could see that you live your life with passion in testimony to her?

No matter how deep your grief or how anguished your soul, bereavement does not free you from your responsibility to live until you die. The gift of life is precious and fragile. Choose life!

*Permission to reprint this article given by Dr. Wolfelt.*



## EDITOR'S JOURNAL

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*In my journey through grief, Gary always told me I could find a story in everyday experiences. He was right!*

# LESSON FROM A SPIDER

I May Hurt. But I Can Heal.

By Nan Zastrow

This morning I was deep cleaning the bedroom and a small black spider, the size of an aspirin, came running across the floor. His little legs were going as fast as they could to outrun my heavy shoe focused on his demise. I hate spiders and even a small one sends shivers down my spine. I quickly stomped him out. Done. Gone. Just that quick.

This triggered a grief burst about how fragile my husband's life was. A vivid, unsettling burst of consequential dimensions! A tiny spiders' life was so insignificant, but it was creating giant waves within me! It was a revealing moment when I realized I never had a chance to say "goodbye" before my husband passed to the next place. It was just that quick. Regrets? Maybe. Missed opportunity? Obviously! But I never would have guessed that day would be the day.

Words of encouragement couldn't change the circumstances.

No time for tears. No time for saying words unsaid. Moments turned to seconds.

Nanoseconds. Things were in motion and wouldn't stop.

A beautiful heart stopped beating. Time stood still.

Death unveiled itself in its repulsive disguise.

Nothing can ever prepare you for death.

It happens, whether unexpectedly or as an inevitable conclusion to escalating events.

Realizing the words of encouragement, I spoke couldn't pull my husband through.

His power to stay was visibly reversed. His ability to maintain faded.

And it wasn't my choice or actions that would allow him to live or to die.

Sometimes we can't outrun or control the story we have yet to tell.

## LESSON FROM A SPIDER...CONTINUED

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Later that day, I picked up my “clutching cross”, put on my Gary necklace, and headed to the cemetery to have words with God and Gary. I needed to grasp a measure of peace in the wake of this unexpected emotional grief burst. I wanted to find solace in a place where I could feel His presence. I needed comfort. I needed to be alone with nature. With God.

I instinctively planted flowers at the cemetery...glancing over at Mom and Dad’s stone. Then moving to Gary’s and Chad’s...realizing the stories of death in my life were growing.

Others were joining the unwelcome club. I clutched my cross until my knuckles were white.

I sobbed. I Prayed.

I lashed out in disbelief. I uttered the words I needed to say.

No need to plead. It was too late for that. I didn’t believe in bargaining anyhow.

So, of what use would it be!

Release. Verbal retaliation. Protest. It exhausted me.

It made me feel better. Redeemed.

Knowing God didn’t need to hear me say those words. He already knew how I felt.

Then, I drove home, my eyes crusted with tears. I hurried to my own wilting garden.

Knowing procrastination and avoidance had already done some damage.

I dug some more. Planting pink flowers, green and red coleus, along with bright pink impatiens, snickering at the absurdity of a name that reckoned with my attitude.

Darn this grief. Why am I taking it so hard! Reprimanding myself for grieving.

Filling the flowerpots Gary prepared last fall as if he knew I would be needing them.

I found satisfaction digging in the dirt.

Feeling the sweat on my brow dampening the brim of Gary’s garden hat now gracing my own scalp. I wondered if he’d chuckle how much I looked like I was on a safari.

I felt tired, worn, dirty and all messed up.

This was grief. It was like the work of grief. It was the toil, the sacrifice, the crazy loss of self-control simultaneously. It hurt.

It was expression. It was a work in progress, the beginning of reflection, growing, redirecting, and healing. I wasn't feeling it yet, but I knew it couldn't be far behind.

The sun was warm, baking actually. But it was melting my wounded spirit.

And then the sprinkling of refreshing water gave life to the thirsty plants struggling to adjust to new ground, new territory.

Transplanted into a new environment. Demanding a new life. Demanding nourishment.

I get it. I know the way. I've been here before. It's familiar now, though it will take me time to absorb it all again, in a new way...with a new perspective...a renewed purpose.

This is healing. I will adjust to this new life. This new environment.

I've just been transplanted to virgin ground...a healing ground. Where time often stands still and only memories of the past can fill the void.

This is what "forever love" feels like. It's the kind that hurts, and hurts. Again, and again.

This is grief. "Grief is love with no place to go."

It's okay to grieve. It's okay to "feel." It's okay to miss him. Everything that happens is okay. I have the power!

That spider's purpose that day—no matter how long his life was—told me I couldn't outrun the Plan. I had no power to control the outcome. I can question. I can protest. I can feel self-pity. I can wish. But I can't change what has happened.

There is a reason. A purpose that I have yet to achieve. Every one of God's creatures great or small, has a purpose. I am a small creature, with limited power but grief has the power to transform. To challenge. To build me up with everything I need to survive. I may hurt, but I can heal.

I choose to survive. I have the power to do so.

**God gave us permission to grieve. But, also, in the words written by Tom Zuba, God also gave us permission to LIVE.**

# There is No End of Things In the Heart

Somebody once told me that. She said it came from a poem she believed in. She understood it to mean that if you took something to heart, really brought it inside those red velvet folds, then it would always be there for you. No matter what happened, it would be there waiting. She said this could mean a person, a place, a dream, or a mission. Anything sacred. She told me that it is all connected in those secret folds of your heart. Always! It is all part of the same and will always be there carrying the same beat as your heart.

I am getting old, and I believe it. At night when I try to sleep but can't, that is when I know it. It is when all the pathways seem to connect, and I see the people I have loved and hated and helped and hurt. I see the hands that reach for me. Yes, the Lord is near. I hear the beat and see and understand what I must do. I know my mission and I know there is no turning away or turning back. And it is in those moments that I know there is no end of the things in the heart.

*(Author unknown. My sister-in-law sent me this—and it described exactly what I have been feeling since my husband's death in January 2023. This is my reason for continuing Wings, even though it's been 30 years strong. Continuing In Memory of Gary and Chad, and just because there is no end of the things in the heart.)*



He said, "If there is a tomorrow  
when we're not together, there  
is something you must always  
remember.

You are braver than you believe,  
Stronger than you seem,  
And smarter than you think.  
But the most important thing is,  
Even if we're apart,  
I am always with you.

(A.A. Milne)



# Reader Feedback

*What is something your loved one said to you or did for you that you remember most?*



Gary always brought home interesting things he “collected” and wanted to share with me such as: unique rocks big and small. One was so big we called it an Eagle egg though no Eagle could ever have laid it. Also, he would bring weeds or plants of interesting species to put into planters. He loved to pick up “household tools” designed to make a job easier but they usually just cluttered the drawer. I wouldn’t have had it any other way. Amusing and heartwarming—each and every one of them.

Nan  
Wausau, WI

There are so many memories that sustain me constantly. I think one of the most important and touching was his desire (and follow through) when he adopted my adult daughter as his own. She was in her early 30’s at the time and he asked her permission and told her he wanted her to be his daughter (for real.) He made himself, my daughter and definitely me very happy. That always stands out in my mind.

Bunny  
Boynton Beach, FL

Kurt gave me flowers for special occasions and the number of flowers was always significant. On our one-month wedding anniversary, he gave me one flower. On our second month

anniversary he gave me two flowers and so on. On our one-year anniversary, he had a bouquet of 12 purple irises (my favorite flower) waiting for me on the table in the restaurant where we had our first date. Another example is when I turned 40, he gave me a bouquet of 40 daisies for the 40 years past with 1 red rose for the coming year. To many people, Kurt seemed stoic and so they were surprised he had a such romantic streak. I felt extra special and loved that he expressed that side of himself for me in such a creative and thoughtful way.

Deanna  
Wausau, WI

I will always remember that my husband always had to go to Sears tool dept when we shopped at the Wausau mall. He couldn’t resist buying one more pliers or wrench, even though he had a drawer full in his tool chest. Tools were his passion.

Audrey  
Wausau, WI

Don traveled a lot during our 40 years of marriage. He always called to say good night. When he was in the nursing home we called each other to say good night until he was no longer able to call or take phone calls. But when I left we made the good night a special time. The night

after he died I got a phone call from a private number at the exact time of his death the night before. I could hear a mumble but could not make out the words. I feel it was Don calling to say good night. He was safe at home.

Ila  
Wausau

My Marcia, my mom, always said endearments three times. Love ya, love ya, loveya.

Reese

The first thought that came to mind was when my son, Jon, was 10 years old. I needed an emergency surgery and wasn’t allowed to go downstairs or lift anything for weeks. The laundry was starting to pile up. This is how the conversation went...

Jon: “I know you can’t walk downstairs, but could you slide down?”

Me: “No, but why?”

Jon: “Well, the laundry is full and if you could show me how to work the washer and dryer I will help”

Me: “You’re such a sweet kid, thank you. Dad can show you when he gets home”

Jon: “Ok”

He was always so helpful and considerate to everyone.

Tara  
Antigo, WI

## READER FEEDBACK...CONTINUED

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I like this thought from my son, Al, who my best golf partner. He worked so hard at making a tee time that would work us. I'll never forget our trip down south to visit his college. 90 plus degrees in North Carolina in July. He was the good son to get his mom's ball that had gone off course out of the dried up stream. What we thought was dried up only to be ankle deep in mud. Their mud is a red clay color. I still have his golf shoes. Memories.

Lisa  
Wausau, WI

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Mike loved to browse eBay for bargains. One of his interests was silver jewelry or precious stones for me or our daughter. Even after his passing we were still getting jewelry in the mail.

Beverly  
Milwaukee, WI

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And one for my son, Chad. He was a Marlboro smoker. For years after he died, we received birthday cards in the mail for Chad from Marlboro. It took awhile for them to figure out he wasn't sending in coupons any more for merchandise. But it always gave us a chuckle and good feeling.

Nan

My Mom had a high regard for showing respect for one's parents regardless of their faults. As my brother and I became young teenagers, we would notice, as most children do, less than pleasant character traits in our father. My brother, being older than me, was more vocal about those "findings" than me. My Mom, who, we could tell, was not necessarily finding the descriptions of our dad's annoying traits as inaccurate, she would always end the conversation with, "Well, that might be the case, but he is your father, and as such, you need to respect him." Mom not only said it but exemplified it by not complaining about our Dad to relatives who were eager to find fault. As an adult those lessons have never left me. I consider it a part of who I am to show respect for those that are older than me, wiser than me, or in positions of authority. My Mom taught us that we did not need to agree or like what our father said, but we needed to obey him and not be critical of him because one day we might be in a similar position, and we would want our own children or other people to give us the benefit of the doubt and not jump to criticism too quickly. I have learned that it is always easier to tear down (people), but of much more value and more difficult to build up, to encourage others. I'm so thankful for that memory of Mom!

Will  
Wausau, WI

The love of my life, Patrick always sent me songs. He taught me a lot about music, and how to listen to it. I always loved music, but not how he explained it. I am so grateful for that. It's hard for me to listen to any kind of music without having sadness in my heart. I miss him terribly. It's like no other pain. I love you, Patrick. Always

Renee  
Marathon City, WI

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Something my mom always said was that I was the best daughter in the whole world to her. Mom called me her "tiger" because I always protected her. I would never let anyone hurt her. I fought for mom with the insurance companies, Medicare, and the rehab company. Told mom not to worry about anything, I would get between mom and them and fight for her. My dad and mom have both passed and I prayed for the Lord to take me instead because I love them and always will.

Debbie  
Schofield, WI

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Pat would fool me almost every April Fool's day. I always thought I would be prepared, but he always managed to pull it off. He made me laugh every day and that is what I loved about him.

Carol  
Merrill, WI



My husband, Bob, liked to leave me little random notes. One day, when I came out of work to head home, there was a note waiting for me on my car seat. It's been over 23 years, and I still have this simple handwritten note that makes me smile! I you, Hon. I'm thinking about you.

Diane  
Weston, WI

Seven years ago I had a severe medical issue. Both of my legs were clotted with blood. It was very painful when I tried to walk. My wife, Jan, was beside herself with worry and was having a hard time knowing what to do. We both loved the sound of spring frogs like peepers. She got me in the car around dusk and drove to the park so we could sit and listen. It was a wonderful thing for her to do for me. Now I listen to the frogs without her and remember.

Tom  
Rhineland, WI

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## On the Lighter Side...



This pastor decided to skip church one Sunday morning and go play golf.

He told his assistant he wasn't feeling well. He drove to a golf course in another city, so nobody would know him.

He teed off on the first hole. A huge gust of wind caught his ball, carried it an extra hundred yards and dropped it right in the hole, for a 450 yard hole in one.

An angel looked at God and said "What'd you do that for?"

God smiled and said "Who's he going to tell?"

# *An Inspirational Story...*

## **Finding Joy**

By Amy Kitsembel MEd FT

It can be easy to find many things to be upset about. We are entitled to this after all, we are grieving! Our expression of sadness and mourning is part of the work of the bereaved. I am always mindful of joining joy with despair. I am cautious to not dismiss the sorrow- but help- find a light to compliment the darkness of our mourning hearts memory. I happen to be composing this on the coldest day yet in Wisconsin (when this is published, who knows what season the day will be entertaining- we are in Wisconsin.) When we have several days of cold and I cannot help but notice how inviting the sun is - as if this ball of warmth is taunting my playful outdoor spirit which is layered up with thick sweaters and socks. "Not too much to be happy about" some may comment, and the weather seems unrelentingly cold is not accommodating time outside today. In my outdoor view I also notice it does seem to be a great day for the birds. I watch woodpeckers of every variety, the cardinal couple and a dozen blue jays' flit about as they enjoy the bounty at the feeders. I am reminded of perspective. I would not otherwise have had this time and opportunity to observe these magnificent colors today, the blue in the sky, the pure white of the snow. I find myself grateful for this gift of shelter and wildlife. "Darkness is the chair that light sits on" – a quote by Alan Wolfelt which I adore in this work for you see- loss is heavy, love is light. We come to our grief experience with depth along with loving light peaks. Somehow it lends its way to a wholehearted human experience. Bringing the darkness and the light to the heart is my hope for all in these times – may you have pause to see the colors through the grey.

*With sorrow and joy.... Amy*



# Be Good to Yourself SELF CARE TIP

## Grief and the Patriotic Holidays

The patriotic holidays that dot our summer calendar remind us to honor the military, law enforcement, and all those who protect our safety and freedom as Americans. And, for others who have died, we remember the holidays as a time in the past when we shared good times. Most of us honor those days with time off work (vacation) and give credit to the holiday as a coincidence. But this year when you salute the red, white and blue, watch the display of fireworks, host a barbeque, take a picnic lunch, swim at the beach, fish at your favorite spot, or take a mini trip----remember that there is some mother, father, spouse, sibling, parent, friend or grandparent who marks this day with different emotions. Their thoughts go to a loved one who didn't come home for the celebration. Say a silent prayer and be thankful for the good times you remember and for the courage to get through the sad times with dignity. Today, be thankful for this moment...because life can change in a blink of the eye.



### Rest In Peace, Mr. President

By Todd Van Beck

**Rest in Peace, Mr. President.** That was the hope...that our presidents would rest in peace, but that has not always happened. For example, between 1865 and 1901 Lincoln's remains were moved 18 times.

Funerals are a reflection of how people live their lives, and this remains true for the funerals of our U.S. presidents. This series offers a glimpse into the deaths and funerals of our presidents, while offering overdue recognition to the scores of funeral professionals who labored ceaselessly to carry out the wishes of the presidents, their families, and in some cases, the wishes of the United States government. Each account tells an interesting story. —TVB

### WILLIAM MCKINLEY

the twenty-fifth President of the United States of America

William McKinley was one of the most popular and genuinely well-liked Presidents in history. It appeared that everybody liked him, except a man named Leon F. Czolgosz.

#### THE DEATH OF LEON F. CZOLGOSZ

Czolgosz was 28 years old and had behaved normally until the age of 25, when went through an acute phase of schizophrenia. Drawing from contact with socialist and Marxist labor leaders in earlier years, Czolgosz became a self-avowed anarchist.

To Czolgosz, the socialist rhetoric meant one thing: the removal of the President. In Czolgosz's mind, the idea was simple: William McKinley was to blame for all of the woes experienced by the working people in the US. Kill the president and the problem is solved. He fantasized that he would become a hero in the image of John Wilkes Booth.

On September 6, 1901, Czolgosz hid a .32 Iver Johnson revolver with a bandage around his hand and used that gun to shoot President McKinley. Czolgosz, arrested on the spot, readily admitted to the shooting. "I killed President McKinley, because I've done my duty. I don't believe one man should have so much service and another man should have none."

Justice was swift. As an anarchist, Czolgosz declined to retain counsel, so the court appointed two attorneys to represent him. After nine hours of testimony the case went to the jury, which took only 34 minutes to find him guilty. Judge Truman C. White sentenced him on September 26, 1901 to death by electrocution.

On October 29, 1901, a little more than seven weeks after McKinley's death, Czolgosz was electrocuted at Auburn State Prison where

On September 6, 1901, Czolgosz shot McKinley, who was attending the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. McKinley was standing in a reception line when Czolgosz shot him twice. The President stood stock-still, staring eye-to-eye with the man who had just shot him. Before he could empty the barrel, Czolgosz was knocked down and disarmed.

Directly following the shooting, the President was treated in the terribly inadequate, small hospital on the grounds of the exposition. Later that evening McKinley was transferred to the home of John G. Milburn to recuperate.

McKinley seemed to improve, but then on Friday the 13th of September, 1901, McKinley's condition turned for the worse. McKinley lingered until he took his last breath at 2:15 AM on Saturday, September 14th. He had lived 58 years and 228 days.

**Drullard & Koch Undertakers** in Buffalo were called to the Milburn House to prepare the President for burial. It was around 5:00 PM on September 14 when the embalmers had completed their work. McKinley was dressed in a night robe and returned to the bed in which he died.

The next day, Drullard & Koch delivered the casket to the Milburn House. The casket, style #2040, was made by the **National Casket Company**. Later the company named this casket "The McKinley." The casket was made of red cedar and carved handsomely by hand. It was covered with the finest black broadcloth with a copper inner liner. The interior was a full-tufted cream grosgrain silk covering. There was shir-

ing at the top of the lid, and the entire interior was caught up with imported silk thread and trimmed at top with a milliner's fold. A French bevel plate glass ran the full length of the top of the casket, which was sealed by tightening twelve bolts.

Once casketed, the President was placed in the parlor of the Milburn House. On Sunday, the first funeral was held, then McKinley was transferred for public viewing at the Buffalo City Hall.

On Monday at 8:47 PM, the funeral train departed Buffalo for Washington, DC. When the funeral train arrived in Washington, it was met by the funeral coach owned by the undertaking firm of **J. William Lee**. When the procession reached the White House, the President was put in state in the East Room.

The next morning, McKinley was taken to the United States Capitol, where there would be funeral services held in the Rotunda. After the formal funeral services in the Capitol building, there was public viewing, and it was estimated that over 55,000 people filed by the President's opened casket.

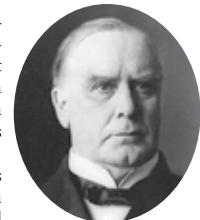
At 8:00 PM, the funeral train left Washington, DC for the final trip back home to Canton, Ohio, where McKinley had been a lawyer and where the final burial services would be held. When the train arrived in Canton, the undertaker **John L. Arnold**, who had been a good friend of the President's, was waiting at the station with his funeral coach.

McKinley was taken to the Stark County Courthouse for public viewing. The final funeral service would be held at the First Methodist Church in Canton, of which McKinley had been an active member for decades.

At 2:30 PM on the day of the funeral, the entire telegraph system in the country was hushed for five minutes in honor of President McKinley. It was estimated that fully 100,000 telegraph operators turned off their communication devices at the same moment.

From 1901 to 1907, the body of McKinley rested in the receiving vault at **Westlawn Cemetery**. Mrs. McKinley died in 1907, and upon her death, fundraising was begun to build a new mausoleum. On October 11, 1907, undertaker John L. Arnold moved the McKinleys and their two deceased daughters to the new presidential mausoleum in Canton.

Todd W. Van Beck is associated with John A. Gupton College in Nashville, and has been an author, teacher, practitioner, and speaker for over 40 years. On May 30, 2018 Van Beck celebrated 50 years in funeral service. You can reach Todd at 615-327-3927.



WILLIAM MCKINLEY



LEON F. CZOLGOSZ

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## FROM THE ARCHIVES

NAN ZASTROW

Co-Founder,  
Wings – A Grief Education Ministry

*REWIND: I wrote a similar article many years ago, but since the recent death of my husband, I have a new perspective now. I thought I learned so much about grief that I could recite what's normal about it in my dreams (and sometimes I did.) However, grief has a way of teaching us, molding us, and preparing us for something greater in life than what we have already experienced. So, this is a "rewind and relearn, on my journey through new grief. It includes an enlightening new outlook on friendship during grief.*

## WALK BESIDE ME AND BE MY FRIEND

*"A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out. Don't walk in front of me, I may not follow. Don't walk behind me, I may not lead. Walk beside me and be my friend." (Charles Caleb Colton)*

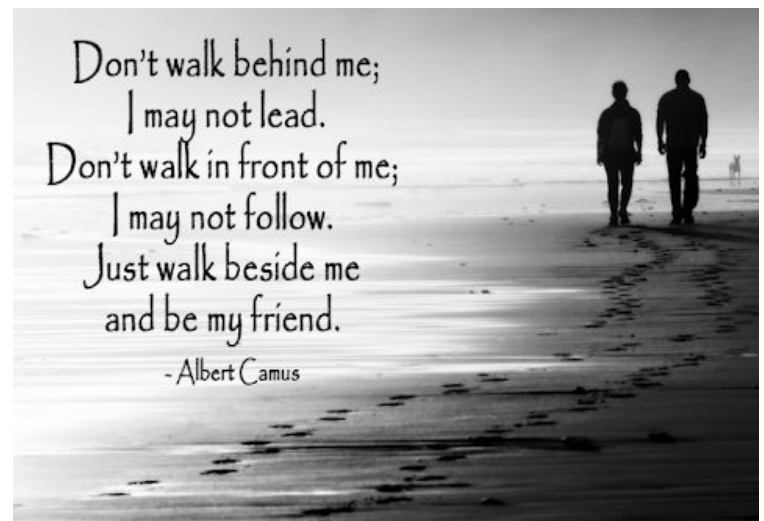
Friendships often change after loss. I can vividly recall a friendship that failed and was very concerning to me at the time. After the death of our son Chad, in 1993, this happened with one of my co-workers who was also a friend whom we did social things with as couples. They came to the funeral, but I didn't hear from them for almost a year after that. One day, she called me and apologized for ignoring us. She said they would really like to go out for dinner again. Halfway through the meal, they started to talk about their son's activities in sports. I said, "I remember when Chad played sports. It seemed we were always..." Suddenly, I felt an uncomfortable silence as though their ears were deaf to me, and the evening abruptly ended. In the days following, I was shattered trying to determine what I did or said that pushed them away.

In my journey through grief, I learned that not everyone who was your friend before your loved one's death, will be your friend during and after your grief and mourning. I presumed that some friends avoided me because they didn't know how to deal with the deep emotions I was expressing. I felt confident that was all that was to it... until many months later.

It's not unusual for some of the friends that are there for you early in your grief will not be there for your duration however long that takes. A few very special people will. I accept that friends and family are not meant to be your

cheering squad. That's not their role. They are present to support you in your darkest hours, but life goes on. And so must theirs! It's perfectly acceptable and normal for them to quit calling, stop visiting, cease sending cards, and silently recede into their own lives with their own events, problems, responsibilities and joy! I do not judge them for their absence.

But the enigma of this experience haunted me for some time, until I discovered an even greater reason for the collapse of our relationship. I changed. I grew. My life fast-forwarded to a new normal and that direction was different than theirs. We didn't have the same things in common anymore. This isn't a bad thing. But I was struck by the significance of my initial reaction. At the time I felt betrayed. I later understood that it was necessary to walk this journey alone and "grow" from my experience. No one could do that for me.



Unmistakably the recent death of my husband changed my perspective on friends in grief. I was prepared for the inevitable. I reminded my better self that all this attention and love isn't going to last. I prepared my mind to accept that this time I had no one to talk to about all the friends who "walk away". I committed to not skipping any opportunity to share time with someone who asked if they could visit with me. I was going to use this period-of-time to gather up all the love and hugs they handed out. But what I've been experiencing is a totally different spin on the same sequence of events. I'm overwhelmed and amazed about the friends who have stepped up to support me in countless ways.

What made the difference? Is it the decades in between significant losses that have allowed our society to learn to accept and embrace those who grieve? Are we as a society becoming more empathetic? Is the subject of death less taboo and more eagerly supported than before? Or is it just a part of the aging process that friends of a certain age have had enough of their own heartache that they are anxious to pay tribute to someone of a similar age with grace? Whatever the reason, I'm grateful for the pleasant surprise.

I'm overwhelmed and comforted by the incredible friendship and support I've received. These are the friends who listen to your story, cry with you, pray for you, and literally show up on your doorstep in a moment of need. These are people who don't change their direction in a store to avoid you, but rather greet you with sincere sympathy and friendly conversation. I've witnessed near strangers who heard my story reach out and ask to share theirs. I've felt the embrace of countless people that Gary and I companioned in our grief education events come to stand next to me now. I've found new friends just by saying "I'm sorry you hurt, too."

I'm grateful for everyone and those whom I have yet to meet. I want to share a story from back then that bears repeating. I once told my sister about two eagles flying over our country home on the anniversary day of Chad and Jenny's (his fiancé) death. I was sure it was a symbolic

message that gave me incredible peace. Some time later she said to me, "Today I saw two eagles soaring together. I thought of Chad and Jenny." And recently, a gift from my brother and his wife of a beautiful crafted Memory Box. They wrote in a card. The picture on the front of this box was so beautiful of where the two of you met. I hope this makes you feel blessed."

For all the people who came forward, you are critical to my personal and spiritual transition during this time. Though grief requires that walk alone to grow, it takes the grace and courage from good friends to nudge you forward as you move.

I had a poster that hung on my office wall and it still applies today:

Who knows the joys that lie ahead

The secret smiles I'll find,

The friends I'll meet

The memories sweet,

The cares I'll leave behind.

Who knows the beauty of the days,

I've never seen before.

My only wish for life is this

The courage to explore.

(author unknown)

I'm grateful for all my friends—those that walked with me and those that walked away. In each circumstance, they gave me the freedom to explore!

# I Never Imagined a Day Without You

©2023 by Nan Zastrow

I never imagined how life would be without you.  
Together we traveled the road of adversity and joy,  
And met every challenge head on with fortitude.  
Sometimes triumphant. Sometimes defeated.  
But always courageous enough to begin again.  
United, as one, we vowed to conquer our foes together.

I never imagined a day without your love surrounding me.  
From the very beginning we had a soul connection.  
Our hearts merged and set in motion the events that would define us.  
Our love had no bounds. We were destined to do “life” together.  
So, I believed that somehow our lifespan would linger indefinitely,  
And we would grow old, really old, together on this journey.

I never imagined how quiet the world would become  
Missing the sound of your laughter resonating in my ears.  
Hearing your chronicles of the day’s events. Sharing mine.  
Now only hearing the echo of my voice speaking to myself  
Longing and wishing that the silence would suddenly break.  
Straining to focus on your words within my head to fill the void.

I never imagined that even nature could change its character.  
The rising golden sun is not as brilliant or warm.  
Disappointed that the patter of rain didn’t fade into a glorious rain-  
bow.  
Hearing God’s creatures, great and small, creating a choir  
Of melodic sounds that could penetrate this sense of hopelessness.  
Wondering where in God’s creation can I find understanding and  
peace.

I never imagined how sad and lonesome the days would seem,  
Watching others create new, unforgettable memories.  
Feeling abandoned and lost in the pit of despair and self-pity.  
Encouraging myself to go places crowded with joyful people.  
Yet, feeling entirely alone in a community of one.  
Anxious to retreat to my quiet home and safe haven.

I never imagined a future without plans, dreams and hope.  
There was always an endless list of possibilities. Drop one. Add two.  
This was the definition of “forward” and the reward of the hunt.  
You took the fear out of uncertainty and hapless “do overs”  
You knew the answers and shaped the magic for my wishfulness.  
Now, leaning on others but knowing it would be impossible to fill  
your shoes.

I never imagined how persistent and long the darkness of night  
could last.  
Wide awake. Seeking sanity from restless sleep and distressing  
thoughts.  
Waiting for the touch of your hand.  
The sound of your breath next to me.  
Counting the minutes anxiously for the refreshing break of dawn—  
a new day.  
Believing that this absence of light was nothing more than my  
imagination  
I never expected to wake up together, and have you gone before dusk.

You were always there. You were my strength in the storms.  
You were there to pick up the pieces when I couldn’t.  
You were there to encourage, inspire, and cheer me on.  
You were there in the darkness, in the light, and in the haze in between  
You were there when I wept bitterly or when I laughed heartily with joy.  
You were there when I needed a hug, and you held my hand tightly.  
Caressing my spirit with your unconditional love and absolute  
acceptance.

I never imagined a day, a night, or a moment without you near me.  
Feeling the surreal emptiness of life continuing without your  
companionship.  
Seeking release from the last vivid memories that scared my heart.  
Longing for one more chance to say the thousands of words I left  
unsaid.  
Knowing the number of years we were together would never  
be enough.  
We often talked about what that kind of life would be someday  
But I never really could imagine beginning the day without you.



# Suggestions to Help You Embrace Being Alone

(Excerpted from “What’s Your Grief—Lists to Help You Through Any Loss” Elanor Haley, and Litsa Williams. For more information, buy the book.)

You can be surrounded by people and still feel lonely. Getting comfortable with being alone is a skill that can be learned. If you’ve lived with a partner, family member, or roommate for years, the shift to being alone can be difficult. The best way to support your well-being is a mix of strategies for decreasing isolation coupled with skills to embrace being alone, including the following:

- 1. Take yourself out.** You don’t need a friend to go to a restaurant, movie, museum, or anywhere else. If going out alone is outside of your comfort zone, ease your way in slowly; start by visiting familiar or comforting places, and then expand beyond them as you become more comfortable venturing out.
- 2. Love your space.** Make your space comfortable for you. Enlist a friend to help with inspiration if your motivation is low. Rearrange furniture, paint, buy art or splurge on music or movies. You get the idea.
- 3. Fight the urge to distract.** If you find the silence of being alone deafening, the logical response is to fill it with noise. Though a little healthy distraction and avoidance can be a great way to cope, learning to be alone with yourself is also important. It might be uncomfortable at first, but start with at least a few minutes of fully present, quiet, alone time each day.
- 4. Consider a pet (responsibly.)** Remember pets require time, energy, and money so make sure you are ready for the commitment before taking this step. A fur friend can be a loving, comforting addition to your household—as long as you are fully capable of taking on this responsibility. Pets should not replace human interaction.
- 5. Try new hobbies.** Choose things you used to do or try something new. There’s no one to judge you if your guitar skills aren’t great or complain that your model train set runs through the dining room, so the sky’s the limit.
- 6. Travel.** Once you get used to doing things solo in your hometown, you’re only a small step away from traveling on your own. If the thought makes you nervous, start with a destination where you’ve been before, somewhere not too far away, or a place where you know someone.



*“Grief is not a planned journey. It is a discovery that happens as a natural response to loss and can become the ultimate experience. It takes everything we think, feel and act up to that point—shuffles it and creates a whole new set of mysteries. Just when we thought we had life figured out. It rattles our composure—and can reduce us to nothing. It can make us feel useless and depleted. We see “light” and are enlightened with soul-power and knowledge comparable to the sages of old. It scrambles logic and can dumbfound the most*

*analytical person. It can reduce a prolific, educated professional into a bumbling fool. The experience can confuse our thoughts until we claim we are “crazy” and realize so is everyone else on the journey. And the journey likely begins with the exact opposite of the “happiest day in our lives.” All this happens until we become transformed by the ordinary miracles of grief.”*

*(Source: Just an Ordinary Miracle of Grief, article Nan Zastrow)*

# Cook It... Freeze it... Or Eat it!



Meals for One...  
Or Two if you  
like leftovers.

*One of my biggest challenges since my husband died is making meals. I'm not a lover of leftovers, so that makes it even more difficult. In this new column to my ELetter, I'd like to share recipes and ideas from those in the same situation. Each month, we'll select one or two to share with the readers. (If this column goes over well, it will continue to be a regular feature that anyone can use whether you cook for one or a whole tribe.)*

**For the next issue, please submit your recipe to [nanwings1@gmail.com](mailto:nanwings1@gmail.com)**

There were quite a few comments about the challenge of cooking for one without specific recipes. Here is a summary of what was sent to me.

- Usually don't plan ahead, so something quick, easy, simple and nutritious is my rule. I make some dishes and freeze individual portions. My freezer is well stocked.
- I occasionally recreate a meal we enjoyed, often around the holidays. The preparations offer fond memories and I freeze single portions for later.
- I buy fresh food from the local grocery and deli. I only buy enough so I don't waste.
- I eat out a lot and bring home left-overs for the next day.

## **Tater Tot Casserole** Tara from Antigo, WI

*Portions to Freeze*

Ingredients:

|                                       |                              |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 lb ground hamburger or turkey       | 1 can cut green beans        |
| 1 medium chopped onion                | 1 green pepper               |
| 1 container of fresh sliced mushrooms | 1 can cream of mushroom soup |
| Shredded cheese of choice             | Tater tots                   |

1. Makes a 9 x 13 pan or cook in smaller portions and freeze for later.
2. Season and brown meat - then mix in soup
3. In a separate pan, sauté onions, peppers, then add in the mushrooms.
3. Combine cooked ingredients, add green beans
4. Fill desired pan(s). I use a mixing bowl to combine ingredients after cooked to easily mix and fill pans
5. Top with cheese and single layer tots
6. Bake uncovered at 350° for 35 mins or until tots are done as desired

THIS recipe is good for freezing meal-size portions. Don't bake them in the oven before you freeze them. You can put the cheese and tots on before freezing. I thaw overnight and bake the next day. As a meal for one, you could use mini loaf pans.



## Three or Four Bean Salad

This recipe makes a large batch. It can be refrigerated for up to a week. It's great as a side dish. I top off a lettuce salad the next day to get my vegetables in for the day. It's healthy. You could make a smaller portion by using the smaller cans (I think 6 oz) of the beans.

|                                      |                                     |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 can dark red kidney beans          | 1 can cut green beans               |
| 1 can of chickpeas or garbanzo beans | Optional: 1 can of yellow wax beans |
| ½ cup of Canola oil                  | ½ cup of sugar                      |
| ½ cup of vinegar                     | Diced celery and onions as desired. |

1. Mix all ingredients together. Add diced onion and celery.
2. Add a small amount of salt and pepper.
3. Store in a closed container in the refrigerator for up to a week.

## French Bread Pizza

Instead of pizza dough, use a loaf of French bread as your crust. It stays crisp on the outside.

1. Cut the loaf in half or to desired size.
2. Brush a mixture of garlic and melted butter on the crust.
3. Bake in preheated oven at 400° for 10 minutes to lightly toast the bread.
4. Spread the pizza sauce or marinara sauce on top.
5. Add the toppings you desire such as turkey pepperoni, mushrooms, green pepper, onion and red pepper flakes. Sprinkle shredded mozzarella over ingredients.
6. Bake again until cheese is melted, about 10 minutes.



### *Who Is Really Your Friend in Grief?*

*A friend in grief is someone you can confide in and trust with your most sensitive feelings and thoughts and in return, expect confidentiality.*

*A friend is not judgmental and allows you to say what you need to say without trying to alter your expression of anger, fear, disappointment, or sadness. These are necessary emotions of grief that help you work through your loss.*

*A friend is willing to listen, sometimes just sharing the silence with you, and accepting your quiet space and your open tears.*

*A friend in grief encourages you to share your memories and talk about events in the life of your loved one.*

*A friend keeps in touch and spends time with you for as long as it takes.*

*A friend in grief will encourage you to reach out and explore your feelings and eventually create new dreams.*

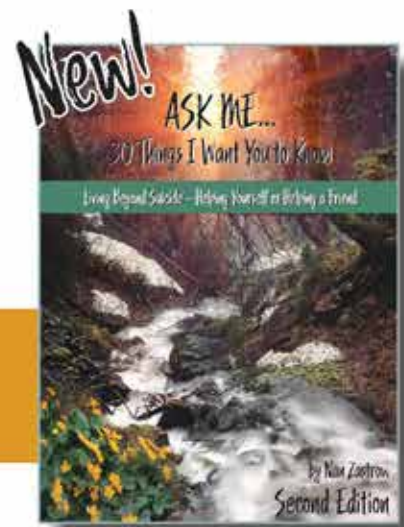
*A friend in grief is there when others walk away.*

*Excerpt from the book Hitch Your Hope to a Star in an article titled "Walk Beside Me and be My Friend", Written by Nan Zastrow*

# ASK ME...

## 30 Things I Want You to Know

Living Beyond Suicide – Helping Yourself or Helping a Friend  
By: Nan Zastrow



Suicide is often silent. It stalks its victim until it seems the only solution is to give in. Suicide involves two prominent factors, fear and the absence of hope. Nothing seems possible to change the course of the victim's path or future. Survivors are left wondering what went wrong and often the reason for the death is a mystery. Learning to live in our society as a survivor requires breaking the silence to live beyond its taboo. Every victim has a unique story that should be honored.

In 1993, Nan and Gary's son, Chad, suicided and ten weeks later his fiancé took her life, too. Nan admits she spent years hiding from their grief, absorbing every bit of damaging pain, swallowing hard-earned pride, admitting feelings of defeat, and finding excuses for what seemed "hard-to-believe." In time, Nan and Gary learned the silence had to stop, and they had the power to "teach" society how to respond to disabling loss.

All griever's want to be heard. The information in this book speaks not only to survivors of suicide, but to anyone who grieves, about the elements of grief and the depth of sadness. If you allow a griever to teach you about the uniqueness of his or her grief, you may learn so much more about the sanctity of life.

In this captivating book, Nan clearly describes the progression of survival and tells you 30 Things that every griever is likely to feel. With these revealing thoughts, you will be able to plan your response in positive ways to support them. As a griever, you will find comfort in knowing what to expect and be assured that peace and hope are the ultimate gifts of triumphing over burdensome grief.

\$6.95



Available at:

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A Grief Education Ministry

P.O. Box 1051  
Wausau, WI 54402-1051

Web: [Wingsgrief.org](http://Wingsgrief.org)  
Email: [nanwings1@gmail.com](mailto:nanwings1@gmail.com)  
[www.centering.org](http://www.centering.org)

# UNDERSTANDING GRIEF SEMINARS

In-Person | Fall 2023



## Bob Baugher, Ph.D., FT (Fellow in Thanatology)

Dr. Baugher is a recently retired Psychology professor at Highline College in Des Moines, Washington where he taught courses in Psychology and Death Education. As a trainer for LivingWorks he has trained more than 1,500 people in suicide intervention.

Dr. Baugher has written books and articles on grief and loss and has given more than 800 workshops across America, including England, South Africa, Australia, Namibia, Australia, Singapore, Canada and the Philippines. He is the professional adviser for both the Seattle widowed support group (Widows Information and Consultation Service) and the South King County Chapter of The Compassionate Friends. [Visit his website at www.bobbaugher.com](http://www.bobbaugher.com)

### SEMINAR ONE

## Your Story of the Life and Death of Your Loved One

A community seminar for grief, healing and hope

Tuesday, September 12, 2023 | 7-9 p.m.

Complimentary public grief seminar. No charge.

Registration is not required. Offers 2 professional CEUS-DSPS

Grief is complex. Along with it comes a set of grief reactions. One includes the painful step for you to tell the story of the life and death of your loved one. Telling the story of life and loss can help begin to make sense out of the loss and perhaps ease some of your grief. By sharing the heartache with others, we can break down the barriers that make us vulnerable and human. You did not ask for the life you are presently living. However, by building resilience, you can learn to live a life your loved one would be proud of. This presentation is for you if you play a key role in helping someone through grief or if you are struggling with telling your story. This program will help you understand the importance of Story in the lives of people struggling with significant loss in their lives. For full description, objectives, and professional CEUs, visit the website. [www.wingsgrief.org](http://www.wingsgrief.org)

Professional CEUs applied for by WI DSPS. Check our website for a posting about the approval of CEUs.

#### Both Seminars will be held at

Holiday Inn & Suites-Cedar Creek  
1000 Imperial Avenue, Rothschild WI

#### For more information, contact:

Wings-a Grief Education Ministry  
Nan Zastrow 715.845..4159 or email [nanwings1@gmail.com](mailto:nanwings1@gmail.com)

### SEMINAR TWO

## Coping with the Trauma of an Unexpected Death

A seminar that explores grief and compassionate bereavement support

Wed., Sept. 13, 2023 | 9:00 a.m.—Noon | Fee: \$50

**Registration Required:** Pre-Register Online at [www.wingsgrief.org](http://www.wingsgrief.org) or register at the door.

As we are well aware, unexpected and traumatic death such as suicide, homicide, accident, medical mistakes, and overdose can intensify grief reactions. Even in the case of a terminally ill person, the death may occur in a way that seems sudden. How an individual receives notification of the death and the support received (or not received) from professionals and family can complicate the grieving process. Trauma includes images of pain, struggle, and fear that challenges the survivor's ability to cope. In this seminar, we will explore how sudden death can create a sense of powerlessness and can affect the way people cope with guilt, anger, obsessive thoughts, sadness, and other grief reactions. We will finish with positive strategies to help survivors. For full description, objectives, and professional CEUs, visit the website. [www.wingsgrief.org](http://www.wingsgrief.org)

#### PRE-REGISTRATION FORM

(For Wed. Sept. 13, 2023 - \$50)

Mail to: Nan Zastrow, 302 S. 56th Ave., Wausau, WI 54401

**Advance Registration:** To save time, mail your check with form to Wings.

**Save a Seat:** Pre-register online at [www.wingsgrief.org](http://www.wingsgrief.org). your voucher will be held at the door and payment can be made by cash or check the day of the event.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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