

## Contents of this ELetter

- Feature: Baby Boomer's Grief
- Editor's Journal: It's not about the Destination...
- I have an Awesome Dragon and Her Name is Courage
- Grief Tip
- Reader Feedback: Accomplishments?
- What's on the Calendar
- Prayer in Solitude

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## BABY BOOMER'S GRIEF

By Rachel Kodanaz, Colorado

As members of the Baby Boomer Generation, we are connected to a large population of people who are often looked upon as influential because of the number of people associated with the group. We are trail blazers, trendsetters and a population of individuals who can dictate which city would be popular for retirees and which financial stocks would make us prosperous. We can create a "fad" because we are in company with so many others. There has been no shortage of articles written lately with proven statistics that the population who are Baby Boomers can influence society in many ways. Could they influence the grief world as well?

To most, being a Baby Boomer carries the dream to retire with a great nest egg, lead a healthy life style and experience exciting adventures, while at the same time enjoying grown children and spoiling grandchildren. For some, this beautifully described life may be interrupted by the loss of a loved one due to illness or death. Whether the loss is a spouse/partner, sibling, parent, friend or child, the setback is unimaginable, changing who we are forever. There is nothing that can prepare us for the emotional derailment of the future that has been envisioned when we experience a loss. I am a Baby Boomer

as well as a widow; and I lost my mother when she was sixty-nine, which taught me firsthand about the derailment that occurs when we lose someone prematurely.

A couple of weeks ago, I had the opportunity of joining eight healthy moms I met through my daughter's high school for a beautiful hike in the Rocky Mountains. As I got out of the car at the trailhead, I realized that four of the eight of us had been widowed before we were fifty years of age for different reasons; arrhythmia, melanoma, a rare protein disease and a ski accident. Fifty percent of our hike group was widowed, changing the vision of the life that we always dreamed would occur. On our own, we continue to raise our children, figure out our finances, take care of the house, work through our emotions and rewrite the scripts of our golden years.

My thoughts immediately went to the four other women who have not been widowed. They were in awe of our ability to go on, talk about our losses, insecurities and the landscape of the unknown in front of us as we continue on our grief journey. It occurred to me that there was no way that they could possibly know what to say or how to react to our conversation, which

*Continued on page 3*



NAN ZASTROW  
Co-Founder,  
Wings – A Grief Education Ministry

## IT'S NOT ABOUT THE DESTINATION... IT'S ABOUT THE SIDE TRIPS ALONG THE WAY.

“It’s not about the destination; it’s about the journey.” We’ve all heard the quote;” and most everyone can recite it. We can even recite stories of other people whose journeys have changed tragedy to triumph, failure to success, unawareness to awareness, sadness to joy etc. However, sometimes, an unplanned side-trip leaves a mark on your life that uncovers greater meaning and depth than the intended journey.

Grief is its own journey. It’s a remarkable pilgrimage that can begin with sadness and end with triumph, success, or joy depending upon the willingness to step off the beaten path and experience the side-trips along the way. Most griever expect their journey to be brief. It doesn’t require any particular planning, and grief simply fades away after a few nights of intense emotion and reflection about those who passed. The immediate outcome a griever desires is a quick return to a happier place where stress, disappointment, uncertainty, bitterness, and unresolved sadness disappear. However, if we happen upon that fork in the road, which one do we choose?

“Getting over it” becomes a griever’s mantra and single focused destination after the death of a significant loved one. Some griever fail to find any reasonable explanation for the need to linger or focus

on the experiences along the way. This journey may be an inconvenience or an intrusion on an enjoyable life, and getting back to normal becomes the goal. If we rush too quickly to recover, we are likely going to miss some of the most rewarding experiences, the profound teachings of life and death, and a period of transition

It’s not that we, my husband, Gary, and me, needed a side trip to awaken our emotions and redirect our destination. We’ve already taken that side-trip. But what amazes me is the repetitiveness and confirmation that the path we chose still serves a purpose. And so it was with a recent trip we planned out East by way



and change in ourselves that can prepare us for our own sacred journey. Far from a griever’s thoughts are any early inklings of this being a life-changing event, self-analysis of a life lived, or the beginning of something deeper and more personal. Healing can happen because of the side-trips along the way. Though unexpected they have the power to transform lives. We become fascinated with “connections”, awed by life stories and the events that alter lives, and obsessed with redirecting our own lives towards a well-planned legacy.

of Philadelphia, Boston, New York and Canada. Together, we spent countless hours planning the miles to travel per day, points of interest, places to stay, and places to eat. In fact we had a very detailed itinerary that promised all the highlights we wished to see. In one final pass of the planned itinerary, we chose to add a never heard of place (at least not to us). Alexandria Bay wasn’t listed in the travel books as a destination to visit. It intrigued us because of its romantic story about a

*Continued on page 7*

made it uncomfortable for them even though they were intrigued by the openness with which we shared our emotions and experience.

As I pondered our hike with the ladies who are still happily married and were struggling to relate to those of us who had been widowed, I thought of the Baby Boomer population. The enormously large population of people who will age gracefully over the next 25 or more years inevitably will lose their parents, spouses and friends. I played out my grief journey in my mind and wondered if my friends and family knew exactly how I felt when my husband passed away, or if they “really” knew what I needed at the time? The truth is they could never imagine what I was going through or what I really needed until they experienced the grief themselves.

If I had all the powers in the world, I would love to be able to educate the world on grief and loss so people could understand the pain and suffering endured following the death of a loved one. Although we could read every book on the shelf teaching ourselves about the intellectual and logical phases of grief, that would not address the emotions griever are living with on a daily basis. It would be truly impossible to create a hypothetical situation on dealing with grief for educational purposes, because emotions are not something you can role play. Instead I think the education should include the awareness that there are different phases of grief, and most importantly how to support friends, family members and co-workers while they are grieving. We cannot take the pain away, but we can help with the grief journey by being supportive and

non-judgmental.

I have facilitated a Baby Boomer Widow(er) group for over five years, as well as a Loss of a Parent group and have been around many different grievers who have had their lives disrupted by devastation. They all have similar thoughts: “my family and friends have no idea of what I am going through or how to be there for me.” How could they? My family hovered over me when my husband passed away paralyzed as to how to help me. If you have a grieving friend, family member or co-worker, here are a few tips to help them through their grief journey.

### **Be a good listener**

Most griever when they feel comfortable enough to share their story and feelings will talk for hours about their loved one, the loss and how much pain they are in. Just listen to them. Try not to “fix” the situation with clichés and words of wisdom. Just listen with passion.

### **Support daily living**

Many griever have very little energy, and daily living is often neglected. If you ask what they need, most will not be able to provide an answer, so look for what they need. Maybe it is driving the carpool, buying groceries, cutting the lawn, babysitting children, making a meal, emptying the dishwasher, washing the clothes, turning off the sprinkler system for the winter or cleaning their house. While these sound simple, the simplest tasks are sometimes the hardest.

### **Stay in touch**

Reality of the loss does not occur immediately; as the days and weeks go by, the griever will begin to realize

how different life has become without their loved one. For those who have not experienced a loss, we often feel we should not mention the loved ones name when in fact that is exactly what the griever wants us to do. So after the initial loss, stay in touch. Your physical presence is very much needed.

### **Be aware of important dates**

Birthdays, anniversaries and milestone events take on a new meaning when you have lost a loved one. The anticipation of the date is often harder than the actual date. Be aware of the needs of the bereaved and be attentive. Send personal notes in the mail and be available for their needs.

As the largest population of Baby Boomers ages, the number of deaths will increase, resulting in more people grieving and even more people not knowing how to help. As a society, if we can embrace the truth that grieving citizens are a reality and we need to know how to interact with them, we will all be more tolerant of those who are suffering. Increasing education of grief in our communities will help those who are suffering a loss to get through their personal journeys and to prepare us for when it is our turn. As Baby Boomers, we can influence the grief world and help those around us.

<http://www.rachelkodanaz.com>

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# I HAVE AN AWESOME DRAGON AND COURAGE IS HER NAME

## *An Inspirational Story*

*By Joy Johnson, Co-Founder: Centering Corporation*

*(This article was written shortly after the death of Joy's husband, Dr. Marvin Johnson)*

I first noticed my dragon as I walked down the corridor of my retirement residence. It's a long corridor and as I walked I didn't know if I would open the door and find my sweet and very ill husband, Marv, alive or dead. I always worried that he would die while I was gone but he insisted on me getting out of our cheery, Disney-colored apartment for at least an hour a day because he wanted "quiet alones". No one was to come there while I was gone.

It's a long corridor.

I have time to worry.

Then, all at once, this dragon was there beside me. I knew instinctively that her name was Courage.

Courage opened the door and we both went in. Everything was okay. Marv smiled his weak smile and

asked me how my lunch had gone. I breathed a sigh of relief and Courage sat down beside me.

I gave the magnificent dragon a sideways glance. She was a brilliant green color with shining scales. On her big, reptilian head she wore a red helmet that stretched across her broad nose and had a silver spike attached to the center right between her eyes. Yo! This was a warrior dragon, a fighting dragon. And her tail and wings? Wow. They took



up the whole apartment. There was a saddle just below her long neck that matched the helmet and the reins and I knew she was a riding dragon and I was the dragon rider, just like Eragon.

She followed me everywhere. I must say she was much better at this than Margaret Thatcher, my tabby cat. I climbed into that saddle and rode, too. The first days after Marv died I rode Courage to the funeral home to plan for his cremation and sign papers. She sat close to me. She is extremely well-behaved. She loved Marv's Celebration of Life service and ate an extra big piece of the cake that said, "Marv's Angel Day. March 28, 2014 (This is A Devil's Food Cake)." She ate the whole word "Devil," then burped a soft little embarrassed burp.

I rode her to a lot of "firsts". We flew – and it's a beautiful view when she's airborne and I can really feel

Courage – to my first movie alone. She sat in the seat beside me. She passed on the popcorn and soda.

We flew to the mobile phone store to take Marv off my phone plan and she put her wings around me when I cried afterward because it felt as if I were deleting him. And that first really bad set of TUGS (Totally Unexpected Grief Surges) found me holding onto the tip of her wing as tight as I could. I was at the Med Center where Marv had been hospitalized way too often. I don't know if it was the time of day, the late afternoon sun coming in the windows by the escalator, or the people in the hall hurrying to go home, but all at once I felt exactly as I had years ago when we lived in our house and I was going home to be with Marv; that sweet, homey feeling of walking into love. I cried when I got to the parking garage

*Continued on page 5*

## I HAVE AN AWESOME DRAGON AND COURAGE IS HER NAME

*Continued from page 4*

and Courage once again wrapped me in her wings.

One time, when I had to explain to a collection agency that they had the wrong Johnson in their unkind letter, Courage looked at the agent and blew a stream of powerful flames at him. She was a fire-breathing dragon and she took no prisoners. The agent destroyed the erroneous claim.

Once while we were flying to an appointment I didn't want to keep, she turned and I took a little sign out of

her mouth. It read, "Seasoned women need STDs. Strength. Tenderness. Determination and Smarts." I laughed. Courage gave me all of those in spades.

I think Courage, in her red spiked helmet, her red saddle and her brilliant scales will be with me for the

rest of my life. When my time comes to die I plan to be sitting in a comfortable chair with my feet up on Courage, who will be lying at my feet. Maybe she'll be in bed with me when I die. Wherever, I'm glad to have that huge

wingtip to hold. I'm glad to be able to sit in her saddle and fly high, and I'm glad to know she will breathe some fire at anyone who tries to hurt me. I will have a warrior dragon every time I need one. Courage, you want half my sandwich, Girl? We're on this journey together.

*Published in Grief Digest magazine:  
Volume 11, Issue #4*

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## I Am Not Contagious

*I am grieving.  
Some days I cry.  
Some days I hurt.*

*I'm not contagious.  
You won't make me cry.  
When you ask about my loved one,  
I love to say their name and share memories.*

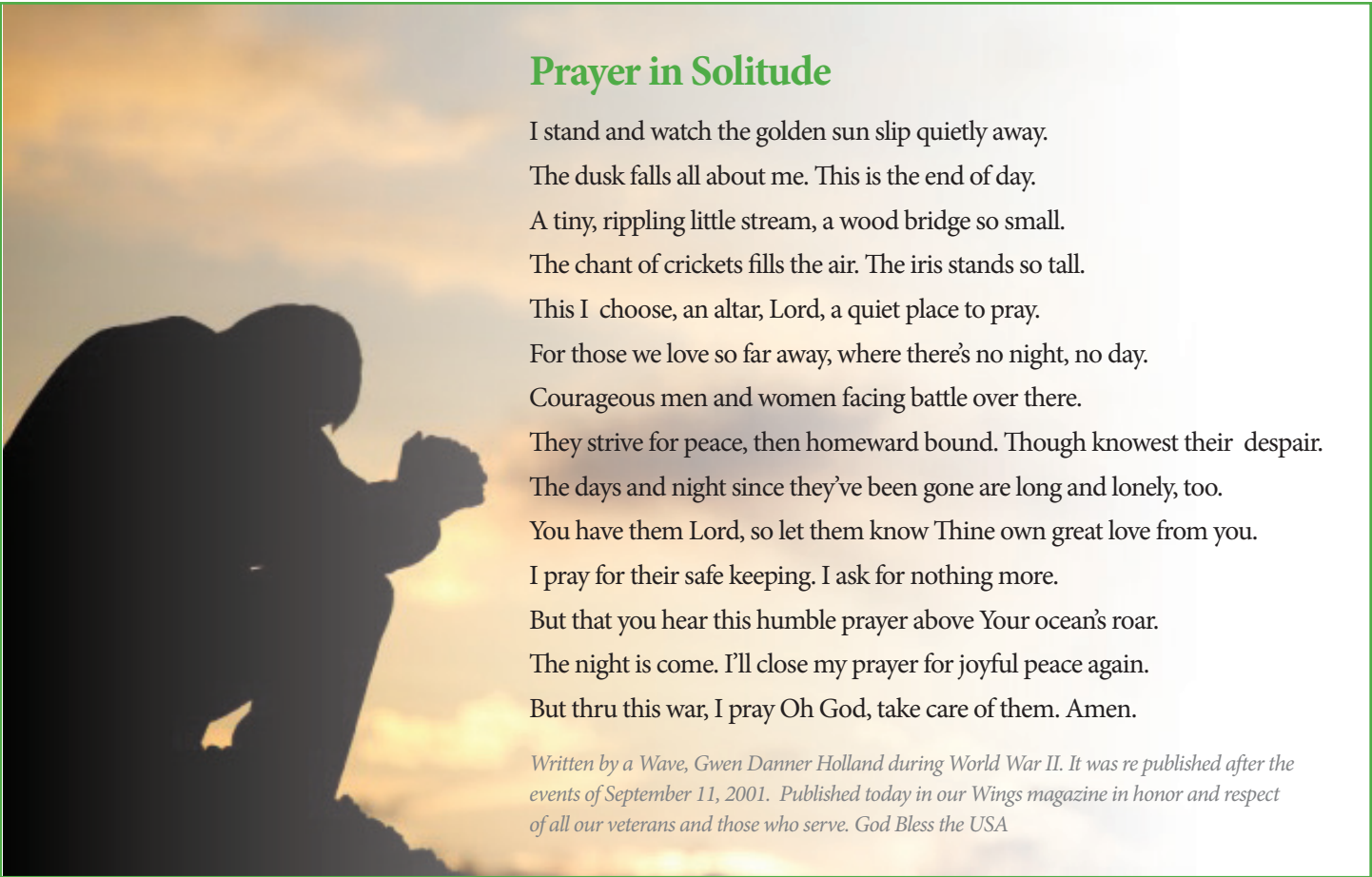
*Some days I hurt.  
I'm not contagious.  
Just know you can't fix me.  
Listen to me, cry with me, or give me a hug.*

*I'm not contagious.  
I'm not over the death of my loved one.  
Please be patient with me.  
I'm learning a whole new way of life.*

*- This poem was written by Rhonda McCullough with the Iron Range Chapter The Compassionate Friends. Rhoda's e mail is-----rhodamccull@yahoo.com  
Her loss is her father, 2 siblings, and her mother.*

*Would you like to share  
your story or poem?*

If you would like to submit a short story, poem, or article, we welcome it. The material does not need to be original, but if it isn't, please include the author or credits that can be printed along with the material. We are looking for articles that inspire the bereaved, teach, and offer hope which is the focus of our ministry of Wings-a Grief Education Ministry. Poems or material may be submitted in memory of your special loved one.



## Prayer in Solitude

I stand and watch the golden sun slip quietly away.  
 The dusk falls all about me. This is the end of day.  
 A tiny, rippling little stream, a wood bridge so small.  
 The chant of crickets fills the air. The iris stands so tall.  
 This I choose, an altar, Lord, a quiet place to pray.  
 For those we love so far away, where there's no night, no day.  
 Courageous men and women facing battle over there.  
 They strive for peace, then homeward bound. Though knowest their despair.  
 The days and night since they've been gone are long and lonely, too.  
 You have them Lord, so let them know Thine own great love from you.  
 I pray for their safe keeping. I ask for nothing more.  
 But that you hear this humble prayer above Your ocean's roar.  
 The night is come. I'll close my prayer for joyful peace again.  
 But thru this war, I pray Oh God, take care of them. Amen.

*Written by a Wave, Gwen Danner Holland during World War II. It was re published after the events of September 11, 2001. Published today in our Wings magazine in honor and respect of all our veterans and those who serve. God Bless the USA*

### How to Connect with Wings:

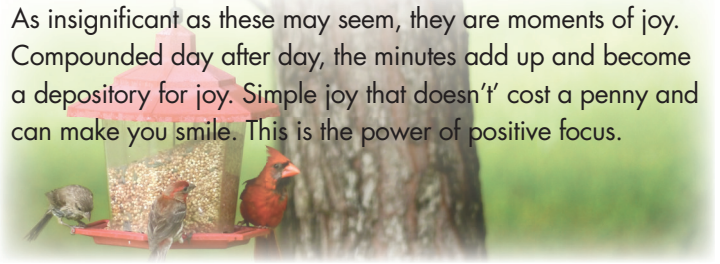
- Email: [nanwings1@gmail.com](mailto:nanwings1@gmail.com)
- Postal: P.O. Box 1051, Wausau, WI 54401
- Phone: 715.845.4159
- Follow the EVENTS calendar posted at the website [wingsgrief.org](http://wingsgrief.org)
- Subscribe to the free online ELetter sent quarterly.
- Order a Free copy of Grief Digest at [www.centeringcorp.com](http://www.centeringcorp.com)
- Visit Wings on Facebook



## *W* Grief Tip:

### Think Positive

Life is not as you expected it to be right now, but there will come a time when it once again has purpose and meaning. When you focus on something that brings you happiness each day, you allow yourself the luxury of seeing that life can be good again. Deliberately find one moment in each day that was positive. Did you get a friendly phone call? Was someone willing to listen to you tell your story? Did you see your favorite bird outside your window? Did you remember a happy time? As insignificant as these may seem, they are moments of joy. Compounded day after day, the minutes add up and become a depository for joy. Simple joy that doesn't cost a penny and can make you smile. This is the power of positive focus.



## IT'S NOT ABOUT THE DESTINATION...

*Continued from page 2*

Castle that was being refurbished on an island named Heart. The Castle of Secrets on Heart Island was built by a millionaire in 1904 and boasted stories of secret hiding places, tunnels, and ghosts. Sounded a little bit romantic and exciting, all at the same time!

Alexandria Bay, New York is connected by the Thousand Islands Bridge to Ontario, Canada. Therefore, this side-trip wasn't too far out of our way. Online we read about the castle and its history of loss and broken hearts. George C. Boldt, millionaire proprietor of the world famous Waldorfs Astoria Hotel began construction on the luxurious castle to display his love for his wife Louise, until she died suddenly. He couldn't imagine his dream castle without the love of his life. So he ordered construction to halt; and Mr. Boldt left the island never to return. The castle stood, unfinished, as a monument of his love. Visitors walk the hallways and stairways of the castle today and can visualize his dreams. Today the castle is being completed as a historical site.

Our side-trip to Boldt Castle in Alexandria Bay reminded us that the side-trip can turn out to be a positive experience if you allow yourself to travel where the journey takes you. Rather than fighting the urge to get it over with, or judging your choice, or devaluing your experience, you have the opportunity to let this become something greater. Sometimes the least anticipated adventure turns out to be an experience that gives deeper insight and meaning to life. The story surrounding the Boldt legacy was such a reminder of the unexpectedness of life. You can have "everything" and a life crisis can leave you stripped to nothing that adds value and purpose to living. At that point,

moving forward is governed strictly by choice. You can walk away or use the experience to build something greater and stronger than imagined. It's your choice and affects all your days and nights going forward.

Getting to that peaceful destination then requires a new kind of focus. Sometimes painful memories and overwhelming questions burdened with uncertainty cause stress. When Gary and I began our journey through grief, we were truly uninformed. The death of our son, by suicide, was our first significant grief experience and was masked with taboo. Not only did we feel that people didn't know how to relate to us, we were at a loss of how to live in a world of overwhelming sadness. We hesitated to ask for help and support. The model we were raised with was to struggle through it on your own. Our first spoken choice was that we wouldn't let this destroy our lives or our marriage. And that commitment gave us the strength to seek resources to understand grief. We chose various side trips along the way. We chose to put ourselves in uncomfortable situations at grief seminars and other learning events because we needed to face the good grief and the bad grief until we knew the difference. We chose to talk about our loss and the ugliness of death by suicide because we needed to accept ourselves that it was just death by another name. We needed to know that our son was not defined by how he died, but rather by the values and character he built while he lived. We chose to make it our passion to help others with grief because we understood the helplessness of being misunderstood.

In grief, there is no shortcut. Grief work—getting in honest touch with your

feelings and exposing them, is exhausting. One day, we felt like we were going to be okay. We could handle this. The next day, we might come crashing down with a lightning bolt grief burst. We scheduled "time-outs", days away from grieving, to allow our fortitude to recharge.

After months and years of relentless searching and trial and error, the vision of our destination came into sight. And so did the accomplishments, the personal growth, and the awareness that life—even with all its mysteries—still had bright possibilities in store. Living life to the fullest is about a continuous journey—whether or not it is complicated by grief. We constantly evolve and reach for the distant star. If we allow ourselves to become complacent and obsessed with any obstacle along the way, we find the obstacles become bigger and the lessons harder to live with. Death and loss are just two of those obstacles along the way.

The trip of your lifetime is about the choices you make, experimenting with side-trips along the way, the mysteries and discoveries, the stories and the memories, and the wisdom from your experience that makes you who you are today. After all, there is only one final destination—going home. And this involves being proud of your life with few regrets. The legacy you leave is the spirit you developed from each and every side-trip. It's the lasting flicker of life that shines in your honor for generations to come.

When life is going well and we are happy, a destination seems less important. We live in the present moment. We enjoy the experience.

*Continued on page 10*

# Reader Feedback



## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

AFTER THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE, THE VISION OF WHAT LIES AHEAD IN THE FUTURE IS OFTEN CLOUDED. MANY TIMES IT SEEMS HOPELESS; AND IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE THAT LIFE CAN BE "GOOD" AND PURPOSEFUL AGAIN. HOWEVER, SOME PEOPLE FIND COURAGE AND EXTRAORDINARY INCENTIVE FROM ADVERSITY. A DESIRE BECOMES A NEW DRIVE, A NEW IDEA, OR A PLAN TO ACHIEVE SOMETHING THEY NEVER THOUGHT THEY COULD DO. THIS DOESN'T HAVE TO BE MONUMENTAL. IT CAN BE AS SIMPLE AS CHANGING SOMETHING ABOUT YOURSELF OR YOUR LIFE. OR, IT CAN INVOLVE HELPING OTHER PEOPLE. OR IT MAY MEAN CONQUERING OBSTACLES THAT SEEMED IMPOSSIBLE.

After my husband, Bob, died in October 1999, I started volunteering with the Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Services (EDS) team in Wausau. Two years later, following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center, as a member of the Salvation Army EDS team, I was given the opportunity to help recovery workers, FDNY and NYPD crews at Ground Zero in New York. Serving at Ground Zero was a life changing experience, looking beyond the personal losses I've had in my life, to seeing the reality of how thousands of families were impacted by what happened on 9/11. I received so much more than I was able to give from the people I met in New York and at Ground Zero. I continue to volunteer on the Salvation Army EDS team today and am forever "Thankful" for emergency personnel who put their lives at risk everyday for you and me.

*Diane, Wausau, WI*

When my son was murdered while teaching in China, I had a broken heart. I decided I needed to keep his memory alive and honor him in positive ways. That's why I did a memory book, became

a grief counselor, and started sending CARE packages to our troops. They have been such a blessing in my life. Working with the military gives me a focus, purpose, and a passion.

*Maxine, North Hollywood, California*

After my son, Tommy was shot and killed, I joined support groups: Parents of Murdered Children and The Compassionate Friends. In the support groups, we talk and listen; that's good but I needed to do something about gun violence. My son was murdered in Harvey, IL August, 2008 and the shooter has never been charged. There are too many guns in the hands of criminals. There are too many guns improperly stored in homes and too many accidental shootings. Initially, I joined a parents group, Purpose Over Pain in Chicago. Now I am with Everytown for Gun Safety as Survivor Outreach Lead IL and Moms Demand Action IL. Recently retired, I busy myself helping survivors, of gun violence, work towards a safer America. June 2, 2015 we had a Wear Orange Campaign. We were involved with encouraging survivors and supporters to wear the color orange like hunters to send

the message "do not shoot"

*Marsha, Illinois*

We all go through losses/ sorrows. Death comes to each of us....as hurtful as a loss is, what has sustained me in this life is knowing that through Christ we will be reunited with loved ones. Isaiah 40:28-31 are verses I know you are familiar with..."Have you never heard or understood? Don't you know that the Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth? He never grows faint or weary. No one can measure the depths of His understanding. He gives power to those who are tired and worn out; He offers strength to the weak. Even youths will become exhausted, and young men will give up. But those who wait on the Lord will find new strength. They will fly high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary.

They will walk and not grow faint." I believe that our Lord and my deceased loved one truly want me to go on with my life and live it to the best of my ability, with God as my sustainer. God's ability to restore life is beyond our understanding.

*Continued on page 10*



## WHAT DO YOU THINK...

*Continued from page 8*

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Forests burn down and are able to grow back. Broken bones heal. Even grief is not a permanent condition. When going through sorrow, know that your times of grief will end, and that you will again find JOY.

Karen, Venice, Florida

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I have a wonderful story about a friend, Jan Lutz, Fremont, Nebraska, where I am a licensed mental health counselor and grief specialist. Jan's husband, George, died suddenly when he had a heart attack in his car that also caught on fire. Jan was a reading specialist and eventually got back to teaching reading after a few weeks off from school. Then she retired a few years later.

However, "what feels like the End... Is often the Beginning". Jan began working with the Make a Wish Nebraska Chapter. She was on the board and then moved to granting wishes for children in her area with life-threatening illnesses. She found an amazing new purpose in life which gave her life new meaning. During this time Jan also discovered she had breast cancer and went through serious chemotherapy for that disease. Then Jan's daughter, Sally-a teacher in Kansas-developed multiple myeloma. Jan still found meaning and purpose in her Wish granting.

Another example, of Jan's "meaning making" is her backyard. I always take my grief support class on a field trip in July to see the terrific transformation of Jan's backyard at the height of its color and bloom. It is a perfect example of change that comes from a loss.

George was a very organized, meticulous person. Everything had a place and everything was IN its place. George only wanted a straight hedge down one side and turning to go across the back of the yard. After George died, Jan decided to add life, color and beauty to her backyard by adding berms covered with gorgeous colors-of-the-rainbow irises that bloom in July. She also added a beautiful waterfall and lovely koi fish pond.

Jan is a loving example of finding a new desire and moving forward in life, making new memories and having new purpose and meaning in life.

Jane, Fremont, Nebraska

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When our youngest son, Zack, died in 2006, we believed that God had a purpose for allowing us to experience this unthinkable tragedy. We claimed His admonition to use every circumstance we go through to help others. We became students of grief, learning all we could that would help us on our new path. We never imagined that our education would extend past a college degree. We dove into the ministry of reaching out to other bereaved parents, a ministry for which this tragedy had given us credentials. In 2008, we opened Heritage Oaks Memorial Chapel in Rocklin, California, so we could be there for people on the worst day of their lives when they have to make final arrangements for their loved one. Owning and operating a funeral home had never crossed our minds! And then, in 2012, Ron started the radio program, "Hope, Healing and Help," a weekly radio broadcast on a local station where he interviews people about their losses and

challenges. The topics range from the loss of a child and how to move forward, to loss of a career and how to start over, to PTSD for soldiers and law enforcement and how they can heal. We developed the website [www.HopeHealingHelp.com](http://www.HopeHealingHelp.com) so people can listen to the programs at their leisure. We included a Resources page and information about our business Sponsors providing visitors with business connections that people can trust.

The Hope, Healing and Help Radio Program exists to bring people Hope for their future, Healing for their grief, and Help on their journey. Where we are now, and the passion we have for what we are doing, is nothing at all as we had imagined... and it's all "Because of Zack!"

Chris & Ron, Roseville, CA.

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My vision after my dad died was clouded, he wasn't supposed to die before mom. He was bigger than life and those people don't ever die. Dad's just don't go away and never come back. Then after the funeral I thought how do we (my siblings and my mom and myself) get through this. I then realized that we get through it together, we call/email/text each other all the time - we pull ourselves into a tight circle of love. I live in Australia and my family is in the states - they get together as much as they can. We make a big deal about the holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, and weddings - we talk about how dad would love to see all these things. The biggest thing for all of us is that we are talking, laughing, crying, it has not been easy at times, we don't always agree but we are a family and that is how

*Continued on page 10*

## WHAT DO YOU THINK...

*Continued from page 9*

families are. As I get ready to move back to the states closer to my family – I am looking forward to joining them in the celebrations, holidays and creating more

memories. I have learned many things about my brothers and sister, since dad's passing but the one thing that I have always thought was important was family,

and friends – keep them close and appreciate the time you spend with them.

Kim, Australia

## FOR OUR NEXT ISSUE: What do you think?

*For many bereaved, the shorter days of autumn are a reminder that the holidays are just around the corner. After the death of a loved one, traditions change. Family gatherings can be painful. Decorating or celebrating is often questionable. There are ways to preserve treasured traditions that honor your loved one that can be incorporated into your holidays. Can you share a story of something you or your family has done or will do this year to share the memory of your loved one during the holidays?*

*For example, here is my story. My son loved to go fishing. The first year after his death we took fishing line from his tackle box and threaded it through a set of ornaments to hang them on the tree. Each year they are a reminder of his love of fishing.*

*We'd love to hear from you for our Fall ELetter. Please include name/city/state. (We will only print your first name). Send your response to [nanwings1@gmail.com](mailto:nanwings1@gmail.com). Please limit your feedback to about 250-300 words.*

## IT'S NOT ABOUT THE DESTINATION...

*Continued from page 7*

So perhaps the bigger goal is to make peace with our past disappointments, our losses, and our grief so that we can discover what we can take away from the ongoing experience. Seek out the adventures. Let the path lead you to where you are meant to be. Pause at unplanned stops. Explore the ride.

Beware of the obstacles and work through the roadblocks. Appreciate the pleasant moments. And, delight in the discoveries. Your most notable side-trip in life that defines who you are might have been unplanned, but highly worth the experience.

*"For a long time it had seemed to me that life was about to begin—real life. But there was always some obstacle in the way, something to be gotten through first, some unfinished business, time still to be served or a debt to be paid. Then life would begin. At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were my life. This perspective has helped me to see there is no way to happiness. Happiness is the way. So treasure every moment that you have and remember that time waits for no one. Happiness is a journey—not a destination. (Alfred D'Souza)*



## What's On the Calendar of Wings – a Grief Education Ministry – July to December

**July 9-12, 2015**

### **Annual National Compassionate Friends Convention**

Dallas, Texas. Nan and Gary will be presenting two workshops and a sharing session.

### **Sept. 8 through October 13 Education and Support Group**

Getting Back to Life After Loss—Part 1, Tuesdays. Meets at Aspirus Wausau Hospital from 6:30—8:00 p.m.

**Sept. 19, 2015**

### **Walk to Prevent Suicide**

Wausau, Watch for more details.

**Sept. 26, 2015**

Invitation to speak for Nan & Gary. Presentation for Iron Range chapter TCF. Virginia, Minnesota

**Tuesday, Dec. 4, 2015**

### **When the Holidays Hurt**

Presentation, Howard Johnson's Conference Center, Wausau

*These are known calendar events at the time of printing this ELetter. Details will be available on the website as information is finalized. Some events are not listed. Call for information if you are looking for resources. Subscribe to Wings and receive updates and announcements by email.*

For information about any of these events, contact Nan at [nanwings1@gmail.com](mailto:nanwings1@gmail.com)  
Subscribe to Wings and receive updates and announcements by email.

*"Life changes every minute of everyday. You lose friends. You gain friends. You realize your friend wasn't ever really your friend and the person you used to hate can make a really good friend. You look for love. You find love. You lose love. You realized all along that you've been loved. You laugh. You cry. You laugh so hard that you cry. You do this. You do that. You really wish you hadn't done that. You then learn from that and you're glad that you did. You have your ups. You have your downs. You see good movies. You see bad movies. You wonder if your life is just a big movie. You look at others and wish you were them. You then realize who they are and glad you're you. You love life. You hate life. In the end you just find yourself happy to be living life no matter what's being thrown at you."*