



**THE  
COMPASSIONATE  
FRIENDS**



# KAMLOOPS CHAPTER

## SUMMER 2015



"The Compassionate Friends is about transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope. It takes people out of the isolation society imposes on the bereaved and lets them express their grief naturally. With the shedding of tears, healing comes. And the newly bereaved get to see people who have survived and are learning to live and love again."

- Simon Stephens Founder TCF

### CHAPTER LEADER

Carol Dreger,  
Box 29 Knutsford, BC, V0E 2A0  
Phone (250) 374-6030  
Email [waskamloops@shaw.ca](mailto:waskamloops@shaw.ca)

### NEWSLETTER

Arleen Simmonds Phone (250)374-2135  
Email [waskamloops@shaw.ca](mailto:waskamloops@shaw.ca)

### MEETINGS.

1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday Every Month @ 7:00 PM  
Kamloops United Church,  
421 St. Paul St. Kamloops

### NEXT MEETINGS

July 8, 2015  
August 5, 2015  
September 2, 2015

### TCF CANADA NATIONAL OFFICE

Email [NationalOffice@TCFCanada.net](mailto:NationalOffice@TCFCanada.net)  
[www.TCFCanada.net](http://www.TCFCanada.net)  
Toll Free: 1-866-823-0141

## Welcome

Especially to those newly bereaved who have joined us for the first time. The Compassionate Friends is a voluntary self help Organization offering support, understanding and hope for the future. All bereaved parents are welcome.

We are sorry we had to meet under such circumstances, but we are glad you found us. We would like to do all we can to help you through these times. We cannot hurry you through it or take away the pain, but we can help you understand more about what you are going through. Sometimes just knowing what you are feeling is normal can be helpful.

We are other parents who have experienced the death of a child and offer understanding and support through our monthly meetings a lending library, support material and a listening ear. We have learned the key to survival for bereaved families is communication.

We ask that you give us more than one meeting to decide if The Compassionate Friends is for you. It takes courage to attend your first meeting, but those who do come find an atmosphere of understanding from other parents and siblings who are having or have experienced the feelings of grief that you are now feeling.

### Idyll by Siegfried Sassoon

In the grey summer garden I shall find you  
With day-break and the morning hills behind you.  
There will be rain-wet roses; stir of wings;  
And down the wood a thrush that wakes and sings.  
Not from the past you'll come, but from that deep  
Where beauty murmurs to the soul asleep:  
And I shall know the sense of life re-born  
From dreams into the mystery of morn  
Where gloom and brightness meet. And standing there  
Till that calm song is done, at last we'll share  
The league-spread, quiring symphonies that are  
Joy in the world, and peace, and dawn's one star.



*Kent Simmonds Photo*

# FYI . . . .

**IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT: July's TCF Kamloops Meeting will be held on the second Wednesday of the month, July 8<sup>th</sup>. Our usual first Wednesday of the month meeting falls on July 1. Please make note of this change.**

**“TCF WHATSHAN LAKE RETREAT Sept. 11th-13th 2015 “SHARING OUR JOURNEY”**

**Sponsored by The Compassionate Friends of Vernon, B.C.**

The Retreat is low-key & there is no pressure to attend the various scheduled activities. The weekend is yours to use however you need to take care of yourself in a nurturing environment. You will be with other Parents/Grandparents who are travelling the same journey and understand. We truly feel that being with other Parents/Grandparents on this most difficult journey of our life is the greatest resource and support.

*For Further Information or to arrange Payment & Registration Pick-up Please contact Kelli at 250-308-8489 or [TCFVernon@hotmail.com](mailto:TCFVernon@hotmail.com)* For those receiving this newsletter electronically an information sheet and registration will be attached. **Registration deadline is June 24.**

**BC Bereavement Helpline Service(s): Helpline, referrals, information.**

**Contact:** (604) 738-9950 **Email:** [bcbh@telus.net](mailto:bcbh@telus.net)

**Website:** [www.bcbereavementhelpline.com](http://www.bcbereavementhelpline.com)

**Suicide Support** [SurvivorAdvocates@yahoo.com](mailto:SurvivorAdvocates@yahoo.com)

**Sibling Websites** [www.tcfatlanta.org/sibling.html](http://www.tcfatlanta.org/sibling.html)

**Grief Works BC Service(s): Provides comprehensive support for the bereaved.**

**Contact:** Kay Johnson at (604) 875-2741 **Email:** [kjohnsoncw.bc.ca](mailto:kjohnsoncw.bc.ca)

**Alive Alone** Support for parents who have no surviving children. <http://www.alivealone.org>

**Grief Watch:** [www.griefwatch.com](http://www.griefwatch.com)

**Canadian Parents Of Murdered Children** <http://www.cpomc.ca/>

**Center For Loss In Multiple Birth (CLIMB) Inc.** [www.climb-support.org](http://www.climb-support.org)

**Pregnancy & Infant Loss Support** [www.nationalshare.org](http://www.nationalshare.org)

**This newsletter is also available in an electronic version. If you are able to change to the electronic version please email us at [waskamloops@shaw.ca](mailto:waskamloops@shaw.ca)**

**CONTRIBUTIONS: THE UNITED WAY** - Contributions to The Compassionate Friends/Kamloops may be made through the United Way. This can be done directly or through payroll deduction. The Compassionate Friends Kamloops Chapter must be specified as the designated recipient. The United Way will issue receipts to individuals for these donations. We are given a total only, no names of donors, and so we thank everyone who donates in this way. Other means of donations can be made directly to The Compassionate Friends of Kamloops or through other employee charity campaigns. We thank all those who support us with their donations, helping to carry out the important outreach done in the memory of our children. *We Are A Registered Charitable Non Profit Organization.# 0792895-09 Receipts Will Be Issued For Income Tax copyright 2015*

# *Editors Musings*

## **Wherever We Go, There We Are.....**

No mistake about it, no matter where we go, what the situation, we take along the sum of all our experience. I was at a celebration of life recently for a fine young man, the son of friends. The individual and collective pain was at times overwhelming. While connecting to the grief of the family I could feel my own pain over the loss of our son rising up and joining into that. We really do not walk alone. We are all a part of humanity and that is as it should be.

The experience of joy as well as sorrow also brings forward so many memories and feelings. We will be celebrating the graduation today of a dear grandson. It is his day alone, but of course the memories of so many family graduations gather in my mind. Some are still here to reminisce and one is watching over us with love.

Well done Jonah Kenneth, we are so proud of you. If a few tears are shed, they are tears of joy!



*Where ever you go, where ever you are this summer, I hope you can take the time to rest and relax and enjoy the healing of nature or whatever it is that nourishes your soul. Do what you need to do for your own well being. There is no map for this journey, no shoulds or oughts; you will find your path to healing; maybe with a little help from your friends.*

Many thanks to TCF Vernon for taking up the challenge to host a Compassionate Friends retreat in September; see FYI page 2 for more details. It has been a very long time since there was a retreat in this area and it is such a healing experience especially for those new on this journey. I have attended TCF retreats and highly recommend this opportunity.

### **OUT OF THE DEPTHS**

There's a path runs through the river,  
many miles, and fathoms deep.  
Endless days of weary travel,  
restless nights in search of sleep.

Out of depths of churning waters,  
the climb is long and steep;  
slippery stones along the bottom  
pierce the soul and make us weep.

When we reach that other shoreline  
our journey doesn't end,  
others struggle in that river,  
reach out and grasp a friend.

*Arleen Simmonds TCF/Kamloops*

*In Loving Memory of Kenneth Bruce Simmonds October 30, 1964 – August 11, 1988  
Kenneth drowned while fishing on the banks of the Thompson River at Wallachin*



# *Lamps For The Journey...*

“Remember then that there is only one important time, and that time is now. The most important one is always the one you are with. And the most important thing is to do good for the one who is standing at your side. This is why we are here.” ? *Jon J. Muth, The Three Questions*

There is, I am convinced, no picture that conveys in all its dreadfulness, a vision of sorrow, despairing, remediless, supreme. If I could paint such a picture, the canvas would show only a woman looking down at her empty arms.” ~ *Charlotte Bronte*

“Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It’s a relationship between equals. Only when we know our own darkness well can we be present with the darkness of others. Compassion becomes real when we recognize our shared humanity.” ~ *Pema Chodron*

"Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under trees on a summer's day, listening to the murmur of the water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time. ~ *John Lubbock*

Find a place inside where there's joy, and the joy will burn out the pain ~. *Joseph Campbell*

The easiest thing to be in the world is you. The most difficult thing to be is what other people want you to be. Don't let them put you in that position. ~*Leo Buscaglia*

We have to go into the despair and go beyond it, by working and doing for somebody else, by using it for something else. ~ *Elie Wiesel*

Your friends will know you better in the first minute you meet than your acquaintances will know you in a thousand years. ~*Richard Bach*

The world breaks everyone, and afterward, some are strong at the broken places. ~ *Ernest Hemingway*

There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are the messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition, and of unspeakable love.~*Washington Irving*

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter. ~ *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Being a father has been, without a doubt, my greatest source of achievement, pride and inspiration. Fatherhood has taught me about unconditional love, reinforced the importance of giving back and taught me how to be a better person. ~` *Naveen Jain*

Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent. ~` *Victor Hugo*

Forgiveness is important in families, especially when there are so many secrets that need to be healed - for the most part, every family's got them. ~ *Tyler Perry*

The art of being wise is the art of knowing what to overlook. ~` *William James*

## I'LL BE SEEING YOU

I'll be seeing you  
In all the old familiar places  
That this heart of mine embraces  
All day and through

In that small cafe  
The park across the way  
The children's carousel  
The chestnut trees, the wishing well

I'll be seeing you  
In every lovely summer's day  
In everything that's light and gay  
I'll always think of you that way

I'll find you in the morning sun  
And when the night is new  
I'll be looking at the moon  
But I'll be seeing you



When I was a small child I remember my mother singing this Vera Lynn popular song. As I grew older I came to know that it was an expression of her grief for my father who sailed off to war and never came home. I also knew that the song was an expression of her gratitude for their brief time together and the comfort her beautiful memories gave her.

Though I missed not having my father in my life and grieved for that, I had few memories to bring comfort and joy to bless me.

I would never have dreamed in my worst nightmare that I would have to walk a path of grief that far surpassed anything I had ever known.

When our son Kenneth was drowned on a beautiful August day I thought that I could never let summer into my life again. The sun, the sky, the colours almost blinded me with tears and sadness.

As I worked my way through my grieving, one slow step after the other I came to appreciate and cherish all the things that gave my son joy in his life. He truly was a child of summer; fishing, camping, swimming, hanging out with friends.

Now I do see him in every summer's day, in everything that's light and gay. There is a kind of gratitude that brings a balm of peace that soaks into those empty places and fills them with his love. I'll always think of him that way.

Arleen Simmonds TCF Kamloops, B.C.

In Loving Memory of Kenneth October 30, 1964 - August 11, 1988



*"Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot sweep it away."* From The Song of Solomon NIV

## Parents Of infants - On Losing A Baby May \*June 2013 \* WINNIPEG CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Unlike parents who have had an older child die, our memories are few, and for some people, even nonexistent. Those of us who have had a baby die have found it common for some people not to recognize the loss as being as tragic as the death of an older child. Maybe it is just as tragic, maybe it isn't. For *most* parents who have lost a baby, the tragedy is felt as intensely as can be. For *many* parents who lose a baby, there is nothing else with which to compare their loss. It is just like we who have lost a child (at no matter what age) feel that no one can understand the way we feel unless they too have lost a child. Those of us who have not lost an older child have nothing to compare the loss of our baby with, just as those who have lost an older child cannot completely understand our feelings upon losing a baby. The death of an infant is often times considered "unfortunate" but so many feel that it can be remedied with the birth of another child. Some people find it difficult to understand the love, hope and the future that has been lost with the death of a "much looked forward to" baby.

In my own situation, I have found that the words of consolation most often given to me are things like, "You're young, you can have other babies. . ." or "It's so much better that you were never able to hold her and love her." And things like, "It's over with, forget it, put it all behind you..." The truth of the matter for me, at least was yes, I could have more babies, but it did not matter how many children I could have in the future, I still had lost Jessica. She was the baby daughter I had wanted and tried to have for eight years. Upon her death, all my hopes and dreams and my happiness I felt, were gone. The daughter I had looked so forward to holding and loving and spending time with was gone. Yes, since her death I have been blessed with the birth of two children, a son and another daughter. I give thanks daily for their health and loving presence. But, just as another child could never take their place, nor have they replaced Jessica.

Was it really better that I didn't get to hold her? I think not. If only I had been able to hold that blessed little angel in my arms, if only for one short moment, I would be better able to cope with my loss. If I had been able to see her (even though she was already dead) I would have had a memory to hold on to the rest of my life. Learn to love her? I already loved her. Any mother who carries a child knows love for that child even though it is unborn. I loved her. I knew her. I knew that she would become quiet and still when I spoke softly to her. I knew that she would react with somewhat violent kicking when surrounded by loud noises. I knew her while she was yet inside me. She was real. I loved her. I can never forget about her. I never want to. I still wonder what she would have grown to be like, what she would have grown to look like. Would she have been fair and active like my son Justin, or would she have been dark and quietly composed like Ashlee? I think about these things even after four years. I expect to think about them for the rest of my life. I wonder what it would have been like around here with three children close in age, playing together. I wonder what it would have been like with three children to love. I wonder.....I guess for a parent of a baby who dies, the wonderings are the worst. We just do not know. We have no memories to cherish.

I am not trying to make a comparison with the loss of a child who lived to be older. I cannot compare things of which I do not know. I just know that a parent who loses a baby feels grief, and loss, to miss a child is to miss a child. Of course, there are, as in everything, various degrees of feeling and to each parent his or her child was special and the feelings still go deep and the loss is still felt at no matter what age a child is lost.  
Deby Amos, TCF/Anniston, Alabama

*"There is, I am convinced, no picture that conveys in all its dreadfulness, a vision of sorrow, despairing, remediless, supreme. If I could paint such a picture, the canvas would show only a woman looking down at her empty arms."* ~ Charlotte Bronte

## Even the Hard Stuff By Pat Schwiebert, R.N. pat@tearsoup.com

Last night at our support group one of the parents spoke of Father's Day and how their family decided they wanted to do something special, but something that didn't include being around people. After a bit of research, a hike in a very remote site was decided upon, a place where it was highly unlikely that they would bump into other hikers.

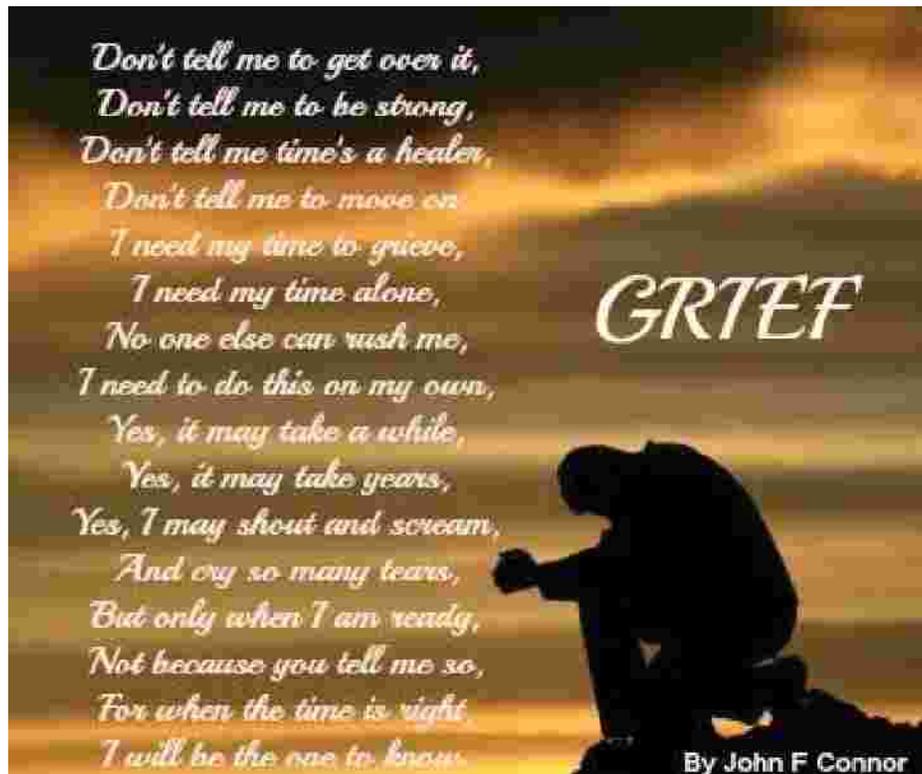
So off they went. It was hard. It was easy. It was unfamiliar. It was a bit daunting. After awhile one wanted to turn back. The other encouraged this family member to stay the course. Not long after the table turned and the other was ready to call it quits. Funny how things can change in an instant.

They were going down when they wanted to go up. They couldn't see the trail ahead. Some of the terrain was overgrown with forest and only a hint of daylight was evident. They weren't sure they would ever reach their planned destination. But in spite of difficulties they encountered they continued on helping each other when one got weary of the unfamiliar journey. And then it appeared: a view filled with wonder and awe, not exempt from risks, but worth the hard work.

Grief couldn't be described any better than that. Life couldn't be described any better than that. We have never been on this road before, but we have been on many other unfamiliar roads through our life journey and we were okay. This one seems a bit more treacherous and filled with peril but we're not going to turn back, rather we are doing what we don't think we can do.

It's a wonderful thing about support groups. You can talk about these trips through grief we are on and others in the group actually enjoy hearing the travelogue. They can see themselves on a similar road. You can't see it when you are on the road, but when you stop and look back for a moment or two it all becomes clear.

Grief is good. Even the hard stuff. Life is good. Even the hard stuff.



# FATHER'S DAY REVISITED

Now I can look back upon that first Father's Day, the first after the death of our son Jeff. I was a mess, a man without hope, with little or no reason for living, deep in my own depressive grief. I could not share any joy with others.

I look back now, wondering how I could have treated my wife and children as I did while they were trying to celebrate in my honor. Inside I was crying out, "What are these useless gifts? Don't you know the only gift I want is to have my son back?"

But it was the love, caring, understanding and nurturing of those loved ones which brought me so far from that first Father's Day. Now I can enjoy the joy of others. I can laugh once again. There is a life worth living.

For all those other fathers for whom this is the first Father's Day without your child, have the best day you can, with the understanding other fathers are with you on this day. One day, you too will be able to revisit this first Father's Day.

*Paul Kinney, BP/USA, Louisville, KY*

## Husband

I see the grief  
behind your earnest eyes.  
(You would give anything  
to have your child again.)

I feel the helplessness  
behind your silent anguish.  
(You would give anything  
to take this hurt away.)

I know you learned  
to keep your tears in hiding.  
And you were taught  
few words to speak for solace,  
-not yours, not mine.

I see the grief  
Behind your earnest eyes.  
And I will know  
to understand and trust you,  
loving father.

Have a peaceful Father's Day.

*From Infants Remembered In Silence Inc.*

## A Hundred-Twenty, Less One

I arrive late and alone this evening in June  
And the band strikes up the time honored tune.  
Pomp and Circumstance resounds through the room  
But the uplifting notes displace none of the gloom.

I slip into a seat far removed from the crowd  
As the grads file in deservedly proud.  
I pause for a moment my head is bowed  
But to honor these students was something I'd vowed.

They had comforted me In my hours of need  
Since the death of my daughter at the age of sixteen  
Halfway through their Junior year  
They had lost a friend whom they held dear.

They take their seats, a hundred-twenty, less one  
I regain control though my heart weighs a ton.  
Speeches begin they mention her name  
Because they're less one they won't be the same.

The school is presented a gift from the class  
Beautiful trees in her honor along with a plaque  
Proclaiming affection for a friend who is gone  
That they, too, are sad they're a hundred -twenty, less one.

My vision's an ocean of blurred red and white  
As I try to focus to see their delight  
As they leave the stage Diplomas in hand  
Their parents rejoicing beginning to stand.

I cannot move til it's over and done  
Mortarboards flying a hundred-twenty, less one.  
I quickly slip out the way that I came  
Not wanting to dampen their dazzling flames.

My tears run unchecked I can't stop them now.  
I've gotten through it though I'll never know how.  
My one consolation this moment in time

She, too, has graduated but to heights sublime.

*by Susan Presler BP/USA Western NY chapter. Reprinted  
from TCF/Winnipeg MB chapter newsletter. May-June 2015.*



## GRADUATION

As Graduation time approaches it brings with it so many memories and emotions. If our child achieved High School Graduation or indeed any of the other graduations that mark the important life passages, we can count on reliving every moment in detail.

The pride, the parties, the excitement and also the fear that some tragedy would strike because of Grad celebrations. Some of us cautioned, counseled and held our breath, only to have death come anyway some other time and place. Some of us had that nightmare come true and Grad will forever signal the saddest anniversary of our lives.

In the instances when our children did not live long enough to achieve these milestones we are left with the emptiness of what might have been. We watch their friends or possible contemporaries moving into the next phase of life while our child is forever frozen into a block of time that never changes and sometimes fades into nothingness for others in our lives.

I hope that when Graduation time rolls around again that some of us will have come far enough to be able to acknowledge the achievements of our young friends. They are all precious children and deserve our praise and support. We honour our own children when we celebrate and affirm the youth all around us.

*Arleen Simmonds TCF/Kamloops, B.C.*

## The Suicide Survivor's Bill of Rights

I have the right  
to be free of guilt.  
I have the right  
not to feel responsible for the suicide death.  
I have the right  
to express my feelings and emotions, even if they  
do not seem acceptable, as long as they do not  
interfere with the rights of others.  
I have the right  
to have my questions answered honestly by  
authorities and family members.  
I have the right  
not to be deceived because others feel they can  
spare me further grief.  
I have the right  
to maintain a sense of hopefulness.  
I have the right  
to peace and dignity.  
I have the right  
to positive feelings about one I lost through  
suicide, regardless of events prior to or at the time  
of the untimely death.  
I have the right  
to retain my individuality and not be judged  
because of the suicide death.  
I have the right  
to seek counseling and support groups to enable  
me to explore my feelings honestly to further the  
acceptance process.  
I have the right  
to reach acceptance.  
I have the right  
to a new beginning.  
I have the right to be.

In memory of Paul Trider  
with thanks to Jann Gingold, M.S.,  
Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, and Rev. Henry Milan.  
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## FOR THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF A SUICIDE

By John O'Donohue

As you huddle around the torn silence,  
Each by this lonely deed exiled  
To a solitary confinement of soul,  
May some small glow from what has been lost  
Return like the kindness of candlelight.

As your eyes strain to sift  
This sudden wall of dark  
And no one can say why  
In such a forsaken, secret way,  
This death was sent for ...  
May one of the lovely hours  
Of memory return  
Like a field of ease  
Among these gravelled days.

May the Angel of Wisdom  
Enter this ruin of absence  
And guide your minds  
To receive this bitter chalice  
So that you do not damage yourselves  
By attending only at the hungry altar  
Of regret and anger and guilt.

May you be given some inkling  
That there could be something else at work  
And that what to you now seems  
Dark, destructive and forlorn,  
Might be a destiny that looks different  
From inside the eternal script.

May vision be granted to you  
To see this with the eyes of providence.  
May your loss become a sanctuary  
Where new presence will dwell  
To refine and enrich  
The rest of your life  
With courage and compassion.

And may your lost loved one  
Enter into the beauty of eternal tranquillity,  
In that place where there is no more sorrow  
Or separation or mourning or tears.

*“May the stars carry your sadness away, may the flowers fill your heart with beauty, may hope forever wipe away your tears, and above all, may silence make you strong.” ~ Chief Dan George*

## **Childhood** *By Edna Jaques*

She does not know that rooms are bleak and bare,  
That poverty dwells with us all the while;  
It is enough for her that I am there  
To praise her little deeds, to sing and smile.

She does not know that heartache hovers near  
Above the place where lie her dolls asleep,  
That eyes grow wide and dark with naked fear  
And life seems such a tired trust to keep.

Sunlight to her is earth's most precious gold,  
Daisies and buttercups are jewels rare,  
A clump of mignonette is wealth untold,  
Her crown a wreath of flowers in her hair.

No banquet hall in all the bounteous land  
Has half the glory of a picnic spread  
Out on a shining beach, with sun and sand,  
Wind in her face, and seagulls overhead.

Oh, may our hearts be glad for common things,  
Whitecaps at sea and tattered driftwood piled,  
Finding in these the peace that Heaven brings.  
Grant us the simple wisdom of a child.

## **Companioned** *By Lucy Maud Montgomery*

I walked to-day, but not alone,  
Adown a windy, sea-girt lea,  
For memory, spendthrift of her charm,  
Peopled the silent lands for me.

The faces of old comradeship  
In golden youth were round my way,  
And in the keening wind I heard  
The songs of many an orient day.

And to me called, from out the pines  
And woven grasses, voices dear,  
As if from elfin lips should fall  
The mimicked tones of yesteryear.

Old laughter echoed o'er the leas  
And love-lipped dreams the past had kept,  
From wayside blooms like honeyed bees  
To company my wanderings crept.

And so I walked, but not alone,  
Right glad companionship had I,  
On that gray meadow waste between  
Dim-litten sea and winnowed sky.

## **On a Baby Buried by the Hawkesbury**

*Lines sent to a young mother By Henry Kendall*

**GRACE** that was lent for a very few hours,  
By the bountiful Spirit above us;  
She sleeps like a flower in the land of the flowers,  
She went ere she knew how to love us.  
Her music of Heaven was strange to this sphere,  
Her voice is a silence for ever;  
In the bitter, wild fall of a sorrowful year,  
We buried our bird by the river.

But the gold of the grass, and the green of the vine,  
And the music of wind and of water,  
And the torrent of song and superlative shine,  
Are close to our dear little daughter.  
The months of the year are all gracious to her,  
A winter breath visits her never;  
She sleeps like a bird in a cradle of myrrh,  
By the banks of the beautiful river.



## **The Boys And Girls Of Summer**

The boys and girls of summer,  
No longer in our sight -  
Those sun-kissed happy faces  
Now fill our dreams at night.  
Long years ago they played and swam,  
Their laughter echoed along the lake.  
Fishing, camping and firelight talks,  
Youthful dreams of the life they'd make.  
Those boys and girls of summer,  
Now swim on a distant shore.  
The memory of their faces,  
Brings summer's joy to the fore.  
Boys and girls of another time,  
Now crowd the sands at the lake.  
Laughing, splashing, in sun and spray,  
Unaware of hearts that watch and ache.

*Arleen Simmonds TCF/Kamloops*

## THE OTHER 'I LOVE YOU'

"Wow. " That one word meant everything to me. There I was, the picture of nervousness in white. The ceremony was just a few minutes away, and there I sat in that room on the brink of one of the biggest days of my life. I looked up, and there you stood in the doorway, all 6'3" of "little" brother complete with tux. I braced myself for what would come next as I saw your face curl into the smile we had always shared.

"Don't touch my stuff." "Cow." "Stay out of my room." This was the extent of our heart-to-hearts growing up. I'd go to my room for peace and quiet and seconds later, your music would be shaking the windows. You drank out of the milk carton, left the bathroom a mess of puddles, and thought nothing was ever your fault. You could spoil even the best of my moods in five seconds flat and then breeze out of the room to finish your day. For years our contact was restricted to passing each other on our way to somewhere else - maybe a wave if we happened to pass on the road. By our late teens, we had grown into our own lives, and they had very little to do each other anymore.

I remember one day I'd noticed you'd started shaving. Another day I was shocked to finally see a hint of muscle on that beanpole frame. It wasn't until my wedding day, though, that I realized that you really, finally had grown up. And it isn't until now that I realize that in such a short time you taught me some really big lessons about life and love. It was impossible to think that in one moment you'd be gone. It was unimaginable to me that the first funeral I'd ever go to was not for my 87-year-old grandmother, but for my 20-year-old brother. And it was crazy to think that this same bratty, brother would be the one to teach me how to live my life and even what it means to really love someone.

One Sunday morning, a phone call from my mom made the unthinkable a reality. Suddenly, those wishes I had always made out loud about being an only child began to echo in my head. I spent the first few nights just rocking and crying and repeating the same four words. "I love you, Mike." "I love you, Mike." Oh, why didn't I ever just tell you that? All that silence, all that yelling, all those opportunities I wasted in getting to know you were eating up my soul. This wasn't the plan. We were supposed to become friends again when we grew up. There was supposed to be so much time left. Time to start over and meet again as adults. How could we just leave things like this? How could we have been so cheated? I got my wedding pictures back right around the time that you died. When I saw them, I remembered that day and what you had said. It was not what I had expected, not "that dress makes you look fat" or "what happened to your hair?" but just one simple word: Wow."

With some people in your life, the words "I love you" just come in another form. The bond between siblings can be a quiet thing that even they don't always realize is there. We may have driven each other crazy all those years. but we couldn't have been so good at it if we hadn't known each other so well. I may not get any more days with you, but I got at least one that meant everything to me. I got one day when you weren't my bratty little brother and I wasn't the stuck-up older sister. I got at least one day when we were more than family; we were friends

It's been a year now, and I think of you every day. I think of you when I feel I'm doing more of what I think I have to do than what I want to do. I remember our Mom ended up being so thankful that you decided to ditch work to go to the lake the day before you died. I think of you when I'm tempted to judge someone because they don't fit in my standards. I remember the friends of yours I had called "losers," who showed up by the hundreds to say how much you meant to them and to be there for your family at the toughest time of our lives. I think of you when I pick up the phone to talk to Mom and Dad every few days, just to keep close and let them know I love them. Because ultimately, the people you love in this life are really all that matter. You taught me that real love persists through anything: the longest silences, the harshest words, and even death, and that sometimes that can be the most painful thing in the world.

I try to remember two things on those really bad days that still come around from time to time. One is that grief is an amazing testament to the person who has left. The more hurt I feel, the more I understand how much you really touched my heart. The second is that sometimes love just hides in strange places for a while, but sooner or later it always turns up, sometimes in the form of just one simple word and a smile. But in any form it takes, it's something to be treasured.

*Kim Singletary, We Need Not Walk Alone National Magazine of The Compassionate Friends*