

The Peace of Wild Things

When despair for the world grows in me
And I wake in the night at the least sound
In fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake rests
In his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things

Who do not take their lives with forethought of grief.
I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
Waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.
- *Wendell Berry*

BFO - TORONTO NEWS

By the end of July of this year, we hope to be in our new facilities at 28 Madison Ave. As most of you probably know, moving is not a fun thing to do, but nevertheless we are excited at the prospect of being in a wonderful red brick house. There's lots of work to do – packing, painting etc., so if anyone has some spare time during the month of July please let us know!

On June 30th, 2006, at North York Civic Centre, BFO-Toronto will be holding a forum on grief and loss within the Black Community called Reclaiming Our Past to Heal Our Present. Allan Bernard, from the Centre for Caribbean Thought, at the University of the West Indies, will be the keynote speaker in the morning, and in the afternoon there will be three workshops. We have already had a lot of interest in this mini conference.

The final report evaluating our progress with our Community Connections Project-Phase II has been completed! Betsy Kappel and Zubeida Ramji, conducted the evaluation and their report is now on-line at www.bfotoronto.ca. This project, funded by Canadian Heritage, aimed to operationalize the recommendations coming out of our Environmental Scan and Program Evaluation conducted in 2002/2003. Our two main goals were for BFO-Toronto to become an inclusive organization that supports bereaved individuals and families from a diversity of backgrounds and experiences and to reach out to two specific communities – Youth, specifically those coming from diverse and underserved communities and the Black community. Please read the report – you will see how much we have accomplished!

Big Night Out, BFO-Toronto's signature fundraising event, will take place on September 13th 2006 at Brand House, located in Toronto's Entertainment District. It will include a live and silent auction; an on-line mini film festival with three categories- music video, commercial and short film; and a casino. We are even having discussions with The Toronto Film Festival (TIFF) and our event could become one of their official events.

Take care everyone,
Janet Wilson, *Executive Director*

This newsletter is produced for our members and supporters and is available by mail and on our website. We welcome submissions, please forward to info@bfotoronto.ca. We reserve the right to edit items submitted for publication. The opinions and ideas expressed by our members and other authors in this newsletter, represent their own unique experiences of grief and do not necessarily reflect the views of BFO-Toronto

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JOURNEYS

A MEMBER SUPPORT NEWSLETTER

Bereaved Families of Ontario
Toronto
Founded in 1978



Healing Through Our Strength/Knowing Our Weakness (Part Two) by Tom Golden LCSW

I was walking through the woods the other day completely merged with the sound of the wood thrush when suddenly my left foot twisted under me as I stepped on a root jutting out in the path. I felt it starting to twist and relieved it by taking all of my weight off of that foot and thereby tumbling unceremoniously to the ground. After a slightly bruised pride and a few choice words I was once again enjoying my walk.

Ever since I broke that left ankle years ago I have had to be especially careful and gentle with it. I am aware that it is one of my weak spots and demands my special attention.

Most of us are aware of our weak spots in our body. Maybe it is our ankle or wrist or some other part. Possibly a sensitivity to the sun or cold weather or maybe to a certain food. We all have weak spots in our bodies but did you know that we also have weak spots in our psyches? These places have many functions and reactions but our interest for this column is how they affect our grief.

You might imagine the psyche as a rope hammock. The grid of rope varies in different places. In some spots it is a tight mesh and in others there may be larger holes. Our weak spots are where the large holes are. This is where things flow in and out with ease. This is not such a bad thing. If we had no weak spots we would be too "defended." Too tight! You might think of an infant who has very few defenses. Their hammock is pretty loose!! As we grow our grid gets tighter and hopefully maintains some of its original flexibility. Maturity requires we use both tight and loose in the right places.

When a strong grief strikes us there are times and places where we have very little control over the outflow of our grief. It comes spontaneously of its own accord without any invitation. When we experience a strong grief such as this our hammock grid of loose and tight becomes clear. We can begin to see where things will pour through. The spots where things pour through are what we are calling "weak spots." Unlike other paths we use in healing ourselves these "weak spots" require no safe places. They could care less where you are or what you are doing. They will spill forth wherever and whenever they wish. There are no ropes in the grid to hold them back. For some people a weak spot may be seeing a certain item in the grocery store, for others it might be a certain song. That item in the grocery brings forth a flood of grief that pours forth without our volition. In a strong grief reaction we can see these vulnerable spots by the way the grief pours through without our consent or invitation. These are the places that our tears will spill forth without any request whatsoever. These are our weak spots.

Cont. pg. 2

These weak spots can be many and varied. For some folks they may be associated with a sense like hearing, taste, or smell. Often people in a strong grief reaction will find that one particular sense will be a channel for floods of grief. For some, certain songs have this power, or possibly the sound of the person's voice on a tape or video. For others the sense of smell may be the source of the grief pouring through.

A friend of mine whose daughter died found that the song "Amazing Grace" was this type of "open window" into his grief. Every time he hears this song the tears flow and flow. A couple whose young child died unexpectedly have this sort of reaction to the smell of roses. When they smell roses they are transported to a place where the intensity of the loss pours through. Interestingly for them the smell of roses arises sometimes spontaneously.

For others it may occur when they are involved in activities that they usually don't like, tend to avoid, or feel inadequate while doing. For some people this is when they are doing something very practical like vacuuming or cooking, for others types of people it might be related to their thinking activities, and for others it might be related to planning their future or daydreaming about possibilities. For many people the weak spots are associated with the areas in their life where they tend to play and have fun.

Everyone has a different vulnerable place....and most of us are not limited to one. If you think back to the early stages of your loss when the pain was fresh and highly unpredictable you may remember the places your pain flowed through without any warning or intention. It may have had to do with being around people or possibly with being alone. Think of your own experience and remember the places for you that brought floods of grief. Knowing these places is not simply an academic exercise. By knowing these spots we can help protect ourselves when we are most vulnerable. We can have at least a small degree of foresight that we may be bombarded through this particular place. It also can hopefully give us a deeper understanding of ourselves and a more forgiving response to these floods and floodettes. By knowing our nature and the paths that floods of feelings may flow we can bless and prepare ourselves.

It is obvious that when we are acutely surrounded with grief it can be of help to know these paths. At these times we need ways to "keep our head above water" and find any thing stable to hold on to for added stability. Knowing these paths may give us a little more stability.

There are other reasons to know these paths. It is not uncommon for people later in grief to experience periods when there is a need to emote but the emotions simply will not come. People feel the pressure of the grief, the dark moods that hover over us when we are burdened with a great deal of unexpressed grief but we cannot find a way to funnel the emotion out of the body. It is at this time that knowing these paths can be of extreme help. This is the time for my friend to play "Amazing Grace." He can now choose to play this song and consciously and intentionally enter into his weak spot. By doing this he will allow the emotion (his tears) a path to be released and therefore bring him towards transformation and healing. Knowing that this is a path for the grief to flow easily can be used to our advantage. We can make conscious use of our "weakness" in order to release the emotions that otherwise seem quite stuck.

Our previously mentioned friends might want to go and buy and smell some roses. The smell of the roses which previously may have brought an unwanted wave of emotion may at this time help them in connecting to emotions that are stagnantly waiting to be released. Others might want to vacuum.

What would be helpful to you?

Tom Golden is a professional speaker, author, and psychotherapist whose area of specialization is healing from loss and trauma.

*Tom gives workshops across the US and Canada on many aspects of this topic. His workshops are known to be both entertaining and informative. Contact Tom at the addresses below (email or snail mail) for inquiries about speaking or training for your group. You can also place secure orders on webhealing.com for Tom's book *Swallowed by a Snake: The Gift of the Masculine Side of Healing*. Tom Golden LCSW, 149 Little Quarry Mews, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20878, USA, 301 670-1027*

BFO-Toronto is *On the Move!*

We are very excited to let you know that after more than a year of searching, we have found a new home for BFO-Toronto! Later this summer, we will be moving into a lovely old home at 28 Madison Avenue just north of Bloor Street. It's about a two-minute walk from the Spadina subway station and while there is no free parking, there are plenty of lots close by. We have signed a six-year lease and will begin the process of fixing the space up in July so that we can be settled in to start our fall programs in mid-September.

We think that this will be the perfect setting to continue the important healing work that BFO has done for over 25 years. Now, more than ever, we need the support of you, our community, to make this move happen.

Here is our wish list:

- Do you have a connection to a home improvement show? Someone that would like to feature BFO's new digs and decorate our new house?
- Do you have a connection to a furniture store/manufacturer? Both office furniture (like Steelcase) and sofas, tables, bookshelves etc. could be donated (a charitable tax receipt will be provided).
- Do you know someone from a security company like ADT who could arrange for a donation of a security system?
- There is some renovation work that needs to be done, along with a TON of painting – can you or someone you know, lend a hand?

Please contact our Executive Director, Janet Wilson, if you have any leads or if you'd like to be contacted to be part of our moving/painting crew!

Our move date is Tuesday, July 25th. Thus, our offices will be closed Monday, July 24th, Tuesday July 25th and Wednesday, July 26th.

Our phone & fax numbers as well as email and websites will stay the same.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Our congratulations and best wishes go to volunteers Cam Britt and Shevaun McGrath on the birth of their twin girls, April 27, 2006. Katherine June (Katie) Britt born 10:55pm, weighing 6lbs 6oz and Sarah Anne born 11:00pm weighing 5lbs 9 oz.

Noah Thorek Award

Each year, two very special awards are presented to volunteers in recognition of both the diversity and quality of their volunteer commitment to Bereaved Families as well as their longevity as volunteers and the effectiveness of their volunteer efforts. The Noah Thorek Award was instituted in 1989 by volunteer Faye Thorek and her husband Michael, in memory of their infant son Noah who died in 1984.

This year's very worthy recipients of the Noah Thorek Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service to BFO-Toronto will be announced in the next edition of Journeys.

Just a Thought

"I am of the opinion
that my life belongs
to the whole community,
and as long as I live
it is my privilege to do for it
whatever I can.

I want to be thoroughly used up
when I die, for the harder I work
the more I live.

I rejoice in life for its own sake.
Life is no brief candle to me.
It is a sort of splendid torch

which I've got hold of
for the moment
and I want to make it burn
as brightly as possible
before handing it
on to future generations."

- *George Bernard Shaw*

BFO-TORONTO'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RECEIVES ROTARY CLUB RECOGNITION AWARD

Each year the Rotary Club of Toronto -Forest Hill chooses someone from the local community to receive the 4 Way Test Award.

This Award is given to a person for conducting/operating their organization according to the highest ethical standards. This award recognizes a person that is a role model in our community. The recipient is recognized for their policies and actions that promote truth, fairness and goodwill, benefiting employees, clients and suppliers.

The Board of Directors is pleased to announce that this year's recipient of the Rotary Club of Toronto - Forest Hill 4 Way Test Award is Janet Wilson, Executive Director of Bereaved Families of Ontario - Toronto.

The Award was presented at the Rotary Club's meeting on June 22, 2006.

The Crossing

On a warm August day
My mother crossed over
She left in a half-beached boat
I know, I was there, I
Felt the wind at my back
That set her afloat.
Though her pallor was dull,
Her knuckles were white
That hard was the grip
She had held on her life
So I cried, "Fare thee well"

Then wrote in the sand
You taught me the last breath
Was drawn by demand
You grew like a flower
Straight up through a rock
They'll be crystals
And choirs
Wherever you dock.

*Written and submitted by
bereaved mother mj mcnicholl*

Widowed Parents of the GTA

A social group for widows and widowers with young children.

Widowed Parents of the GTA is proud to say that for our Geneva Park outing this coming July long weekend we have a total of 26 families attending.

Widowed Parents is going into its 5th year of peer support for bereaved spouses and their children in a social context. Our schedule resumes in September 2006:

SEPT. 10TH fall picnic • **SEPT. 30TH** adult night out • **OCT. TBA** Pumpkin Carving • **NOV. 18TH** adult night out • **DEC. 2ND** Holiday party

Widowed Parents outings help to normalize the experience of grief through interaction in everyday social situations. We alternate month to month from adult events to events for the children. One way to mend a broken heart is to get out and make new memories. My friends at WPGTA listened to me when I was down and gave me reasons to laugh again.

If you are interested in any of our group events please contact Donna Rowe at 416 693 7836 or widowedparents-gta@rogers.com.

In Memory Wristbands

You've probably been seeing them everywhere... the yellow Livestrong wristbands, the pink ones in support of finding a cure for breast cancer, and many more. Now BFO-Toronto is pleased to offer these lovely wristbands in memory of your loved one who died. The wristbands are white with the words "In memory" engraved on them. They can be purchased at our office for a small donation. If you would like to order a number of wristbands and have them mailed right to your door please contact our Communications and Special Events Coordinator at 416.440.0290 x.17 or via email at klopes@bfotoronto.ca to place an order.

IN MEMORIAM

*Michelle Gargaro
Nicole Anna Galli
Aurora Barlow
Nicole Friedman
John Graves
Hartley A. Rosenthal
Irving Kirsch
Carrie Evans
Dan Loch
Ashley William Christopher
Joseph & John Burkitt
Emily Senn Robertson
Jacques Hardy
Brenda Bernofsky-Green
David Howard Ballett
Daniel Siatkowski
Donnie Page
Lisa Shore
Hester Katz
Arlen Maxwell
Kristin Alissa
Holli-Lyne Toulouse
Nellie Almeida
Ryan Addison
Alan Royer
Dean Justin Pace
W. Bruce Nightingale
Alber James Morton
Sean Michael Stewart
Dan and Kathy Phelan
Karl Urlich Walter
William Thomas Watson
Jeffrey Moulton
Joseph Vayda
Christopher Michael Antolin
Jeremy Tucker
Scot J. Mailer
Sandra Simmons
Aaron Adams
Greg Doherty
Michael Allen Harte*

LOSING LOVE ...

'You'll get over it...' It's the clichés that cause the trouble. To lose someone you love is to alter your life forever. You don't get over it because 'it' is the person you loved. The pain stops, there are new people, but the gap never closes. How could it? The particularness of someone who mattered enough to grieve over is not made anodyne by death. This hole in my heart is the shape of you and no-one else can fit it. Why would I want them to? I've thought a lot about death recently, the finality of it, the argument ending in mid-air. One of us hadn't finished, why did the other one go? And why without warning? Even death after long illness is without warning. The moment you had prepared for so carefully took you by storm. The troops broke through the window and snatched the body and the body is gone. The day before the Wednesday last, this time a year ago, you were here and now you're not. Why not? Death reduces us to the baffled logic of a child. If yesterday why not today? And where are you? Fragile creatures of a small blue planet, surrounded by light years of silent space. Do the dead find peace beyond the rattle of the world? What peace is there for us whose best love cannot return them even for a day? I raise my head to the door and think I will see you in the frame. I know it is your voice in the corridor but when I run outside the corridor is empty. There is nothing I can do that will make any difference. The last word is yours. The fluttering in the stomach goes away and the dull waking pain. Sometimes I think of you and I feel giddy. Memory makes me lightheaded, drunk on champagne. All the things we did. And if anyone had said this was the price I would have agreed to pay it. That surprises me; that with the hurt and the mess comes a shaft of recognition. It was worth it. Love is worth it."- *Jeanette Winterson, Written on the Body*

The End

It is time for me to go, Mother; I am going.
When in the paling darkness of the lonely dawn
you stretch out your arms for your baby in the bed,
I shall say, "Baby is not there!" — Mother, I am going.
I shall become a delicate draught of air and caress you;
and I shall be ripples in the water when you bathe,
and kiss you and kiss you again.
In the gusty night when the rain patters on the leaves
you will hear my whisper in your bed,
and my laughter will flash with the lightning
through the open window into your room.
If you lie awake,
thinking of your baby till late into the night,
I shall sing to you from the stars,
"Sleep, mother, sleep."
On the straying moonbeams
I shall steal over your bed,
and lie upon your bosom while you sleep.
I shall become a dream,
and through the little opening of your eyelids
I shall slip into the depths of your sleep;
and when you wake up and look round startled,
like a twinkling firefly I shall flit out into the darkness.
When, on the great festival of puja,
the neighbors' children come and play about the house,
I shall melt into the music of the flute
and throb in your heart all day.
Dear Auntie will come with puja-presents and will ask,

"Where is our baby, Sister?"
Mother, you will tell her softly,
"He is in the pupil of my eyes,
he is in my body and my soul."

— *Rabindranath Tagore,*
in Collected Poems and Plays of Rabindranath Tagore

Some survivors
try to think their way through grief.
That doesn't work.
Grief is a releasing process,
a discovery process,
a healing process.
We cannot release or discover or heal
by the use of our minds alone.
The brain must follow the heart
at a respectful distance.
It is our hearts that ache when a loved one dies.
It is our emotions that are most drastically affected.
Certainly the mind suffers,
the mind recalls,
the mind may plot and plan and wish,
but it is the heart
that will blaze the trail
through the thicket of grief.

— *Carol Staudacher, in A Time to Grieve*

VOLUNTEER AWARDS AT THE 2006 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

by *Betty Ann Rutledge, Program Manager*

May we love ever more.

May we motivate ourselves to committed love in Action.

May we motivate ourselves to live the life we wish to see in the world.

May we be the transformation we wish to see in the world.

From the inside out . . .

From the roots branching upwards . . .

From the heart

to thought

to word

to action.

Through life's trials and hardships

we can arise beautiful and free.

for luna - julia butterfly hill - 11/26/2000



Our incredible community of volunteers at Bereaved Families of Ontario-Toronto live the words of Julia Hill in every moment of connection and caring they bring to the people they support. They are beacons of hope and through their "committed love in Action" continue the cycle of hope and healing that has been the BFO model for over 28 years. At this year's Annual General Meeting and Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, volunteers were recognized in the following areas:

2006 FIRST TIME FACILITATOR AND ADVISOR CERTIFICATES

Sharon Abramson • Helene Daignault • Robin Pacific • Emily Ryckman • Gilles Lavigne • Sonia Schwartz
Felicity Duncan • Claire Macarandang • Dave Barlow • Julia Farquharson • Esther Kalaba • Christine
Giavarini • Stephnie Clarke • Michelle Hughes • Michael Chiu • David Percival • Kirsten Martiniuk
Paul Brown • Jane Kennedy • Monicke Hanson • Linda Cheeseman • Keith Watkins • Christine Hardy
Laura Shook • Cheryl Gaster • Sue Thompson • Natalie Dickinson • Karen Haffey • Vik Chopra
Beverly Guttman • Kathy Macerollo • Sangeeta Chopra • Marilyn Ortega

FIRST YEAR VOLUNTEERS – BOARD/COMMITTEE/OTHER CERTIFICATES

Bohdan Buczko • Doug Gellatly • Jocelyn Mongrain • Joette Kruger

5-YEAR VOLUNTEER CERTIFICATE AND BFO PIN

Margaret Lee-Tung • Judith McCaffery • Cathy Sloane • Carine Blin • Suzanne Corker • Allison Amery
Rena Klisouris • Margot Marcus • Sally Schoellkopf

10-YEAR VOLUNTEER CERTIFICATE AND BFO PIN

Dorothy Burton • Carol Hewitt • Terry Himal • Siobhan Mulcahy

15-YEAR VOLUNTEER CERTIFICATE AND PHOTO FRAME

Elaine Gort • Barb Lazroe

20-YEAR VOLUNTEER CERTIFICATE AND PHOTO FRAME

Pat Phelan • Barb Powell