



# The Compassionate Friends

## Marin County Chapter

### Supporting Family After a Child Dies



MAY—JUNE, 2020 ISSUE

Vol 41, No. 3

#1184

This issue of the TCF Marin Newsletter is sponsored by love gifts from our members.

**Chapter Leader:**

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**Facilitator:**

Mark Rosengarden

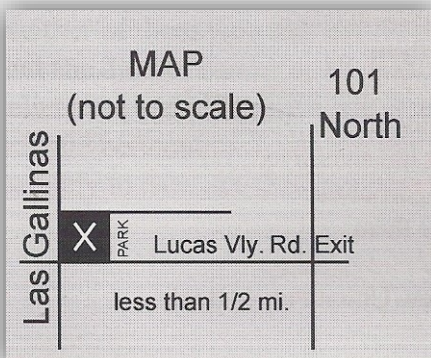
**TCF Marin Monthly Meetings:**

**Meetings Temporarily Suspended**

Group meetings are normally held on the third Monday of the month from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Hillside Church at Lucas Valley.

2000 Las Gallinas Avenue  
(at Lucas Valley Road)  
San Rafael, CA

**First time attendees** are encouraged to arrive at 7:00 for orientation. All attendees arriving before 7:00 p.m. are asked to sign in and be seated in the lobby until the meeting room is ready. The TCF Newsletter and informational pamphlets will be displayed for attendees to browse.



**FORWARD to this edition:**

We sincerely regret not being able to hold our usual monthly support meetings due to the Coronavirus pandemic and the mandatory shelter-in-place quarantine. Please know that we ARE here to help you in your times of need. Please reach out to us by email at tcf-marin@gmail.com or check our website for more up to date contact information.

Please let us know if you are not receiving periodic email information or if your email address is not on our contact list. We will add you to the list.

Thank you for your continuing support at this trying time.



**Mothers' Day, "Before" and "After"**

While sorting through boxes and bags, it is not unusual for me to find something unexpected. It happened just the other day. Shifting through a box, I came across a wrinkled, somewhat yellowed piece of lined school paper. I carefully unfolded it only to find a drawing of a stick-Mom and stick-daughter standing alongside a mammoth daisy. The mom and little girl were holding hands with huge lop-sided grins on their faces. In her little girl just-learning to-print handwriting were the words, "Happy Mother's Day, Mommy. I love you, Kristina."

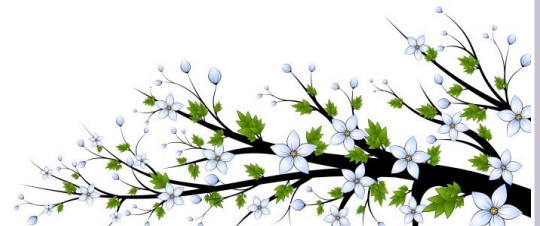
Even six years later, little "gifts" such as these can bring fresh tears. It is times like these that I am glad that I was an incredible pack rat, especially when it came to saving things that my children have made. I can picture my then-blond, petite little Nina (her nickname), with the wispy hair, bent over the kitchen table, crayon in hand, creating that handmade card filled with love. Memories of breakfasts in bed, only to return to the kitchen after finishing the "gourmet" meal served with tender care, to find it in such disarray that it took hours to clean up! Even through the tears, these are the sweetest memories.

As I type this, I look at another gift from a Mother's Day past; a little statue

**Meeting Calendar**

**Third Monday of the Month:**

- Monday, May 18, 2020
- Monday, June 15, 2020
- Monday, July 20, 2020
- Monday, August 17, 2020



## **TCF RESOURCES:**

### ***TCF Marin County, CA Chapter***

P.O. Box 150935  
San Rafael, CA 94915  
www.tcfmarin.org  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/36595597804>  
Info: Eileen Rusky (415) 457-3123

### ***TCF San Francisco and Peninsula Chapter***

Meets: 2nd Wednesday  
Taraval Police Sta. 2345, 24th Ave  
Contact: Audre Hallum  
650.359.7928, [cwhallum1@mac.com](mailto:cwhallum1@mac.com)  
Co Leaders: Meg Cunningham, Doug Cameron

### ***TCF Sonoma County Chapter***

[tcf.sonomacounty@gmail.com](mailto:tcf.sonomacounty@gmail.com)  
(707) 490-8640

### ***Northern CA Regional Coordinator:***

Nancy Juracka  
[nancy\\_juracka@yahoo.com](mailto:nancy_juracka@yahoo.com)

### ***TCF National Office:***

P.O. Box 3696  
Oak Brook, IL 60533-3696  
Phone: (630) 990-0010  
Toll Free: (877) 969-0010  
Fax: (630) 990-0246  
Email: [nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org](mailto:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org)  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

### ***Additional Support Sites***

[opentohope.com](http://opentohope.com)  
[survivorsofselfharm.com](http://survivorsofselfharm.com)  
[griefspeaks.com](http://griefspeaks.com)

### ***Other Grief Counseling Resources***

Hospice by the Bay offers individual and group grief counseling.  
Free monthly drop in 1st Thursday 11am-12pm 17 E. Sir Francis Drake, Larkspur.  
Marin and SF (415) 526-5699  
Sonoma (707) 931-7299  
Email: [griefsupport@hbtb.org](mailto:griefsupport@hbtb.org)  
Website: [www.hospicebythebay.org](http://www.hospicebythebay.org)

### ***North Bay Grief Recovery in San Rafael***

[www.NorthBayGriefRecovery.com](http://www.NorthBayGriefRecovery.com)  
Ph.: 415-250-3027

### ***American Foundation for Suicide Prevention***

[www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org) Ph.: 707.721.4062

of a harried mom, surrounded by mop, broom and bucket, that says, "World's Greatest Mom", chosen for me at a neighborhood garage sale. I came across it accidentally shortly after Nina's death, unearthing it from its hiding place. I wondered to myself, why had I packed it away. Did Nina know that I did and did she think that, by doing so, I hadn't appreciated her gift? Did I ever thank her for it along with the other garage sale items that she proudly brought home to me, or did it show on my face that I really didn't need any more "junk" around the house? Sometimes resurrecting these treasures can bring unpleasant feelings of guilt as we wonder if our children knew how much their little gestures of love meant to us. When our child dies, it becomes easy to second-guess ourselves, trapped in our fixations and exaggerations of the negative things that may have occurred during our child's life.

The first Mother's Day after Nina died was a grief numbing blur, as it occurred only three days following her death. Unlike previous joyful dinners out with my four children pampering their mom, we spent the day making funeral arrangements and choosing a casket for one of them. In the early evening, I overheard it said to someone else, "Happy Mother's Day." I turned to my own mother and apologized for having forgotten.

I could not imagine ever celebrating another Mother's Day again. I am sure the dads have these same feelings on Father's Day. My heart goes out to them, because I think we forget that they, just like us, grieve and hurt, too.

For those mothers and fathers who have lost their only child, I have been saddened by stories told to me by them of attending church on Mother's Day Sunday and when the pastor asked the mothers in the church to please stand, they were undecided on whether they should stand or not. I hope that they will always remember, and the fathers as well, "Once a mother, always a mother; once a father, always a father." We are forever their parents.

If we are fortunate to have surviving children, they are often forgotten as well. In the early days, we become obsessed with the one who is missing. My own children showed quiet patience with this. I often wonder if they thought "What about us? We're still here!" Now with almost seven Mother's Days behind me, I try to accentuate what I do have. This does not happen overnight. I found that in celebrating my surviving children, I could still honor Nina's memory and find ways to include her as well. I have developed a ritual where I get up early on that morning and bring flowers out to the cemetery. I bring a flower and a note to some of the mothers that I know who have buried children there to tell them I am thinking of them and their child. There is something very healing when reaching out to others. I then sit by my daughter's grave-site on the spring-green grass listening to the sweet call of a robin. I bring her a flower and write in her journal telling her how thankful I am to be her mother, how much I love and miss her. That is our private time together; the rest of the day is spent honoring my other children.

Mother's Day and Father's Day are holidays especially created for us. Try to get through them the best that you can, in whatever way feels right for you. Truly, only you know what that is. Whether it is alone those first few years or with people that you love and who understand, do something that you find comforting. It is your day, for you were the giver of a precious life – you held a miracle in your arms. Even as powerfully destructive as death is, even that cannot take those memories away from you - they are your child's gift to you.

With gentle thoughts and peace on your special day,



Cathy L. Seehuetter, TCF St. Paul, MN  
In Memory of my daughter, Nina

## Carol's Corner

by Carol Kearns, PhD  
author of "Sugar Cookies and a Nightmare"



### Columns for The Compassionate Friends

I have found great solace volunteering for The Compassionate Friends, a hard-working group that supports families seeking "the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child" ([www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)). My columns discuss topics of continuing concern in the Marin County CA newsletter. - Carol

#### Trapped in Pain

After my last article, "Suicide and Loss," I received this question from a mother whose 19-year-old son, "Paul" (not his name), was killed instantly when his truck rolled over:

"I can't live with the pain of losing Paul, but I feel so caught. His death is the last memory I have. If I lose the pain, will I lose a part of him also?"

This is such an important question because so many who are grieving the loss of a child feel the closeness and the constancy of pain. But here are some other things to consider.

First, remember that you will always have the pain of missing him and your future with him. That pain will find its place as you build on the legacy -- whatever made him unique and wonderful in your life -- that your child gave you.

Second, remember that when your son was born, you had the pain of birthing that was eventually replaced by the beautiful little baby you cuddled, nurtured and watched grow. You had 19 years of good and bad memories of Paul, and they will not be lost. They are all yours. No one can take them from you.

It is much harder, but not impossible, to let go of the pain associated with his death. Letting go of the pain does not mean you'll stop missing him. At times your tears will flow, as they should, but ask yourself this:

"If Paul had one wish for me now, what would he want? Would he want me to hold onto my pain as a way of holding onto him?" Only you can answer that, but I doubt the answer would be yes.

Grief is complicated, often subconscious but nonetheless real. It may cause us to hold onto our pain because of guilt. What parent doesn't feel guilt after the death of a child? Our role as a parent is to protect our child; when he or she dies, we often feel we have failed as parents, and therefore we deserve the pain and no better. Our child is dead. How dare we go on to have a happy, fulfilled life?

I find it hard to believe that your Paul would want you to suffer for the rest of your life because he can no longer be with you. I can't believe any of our children want to be remembered in that way. In fact, I think if there is an afterlife and it's as wonderful as we've heard, their only wish is for us not to suffer now. I know our children want us to work through the pain and be happy again.

In my case I had a memorable bubble bath where I thought of just slipping under the water to lose my pain. In that same bubble bath I confronted the pain of my daughter's death only to find myself closer to her. I felt horrible outside the bath and terrible when I entered it. As I sat there, I decided to challenge the pain -- face it head on. I decided to feel it, to let it envelope me -- not to deny it -- and after a few minutes I began to feel my Kristen close to me.

This was the first time after her death that I felt this way -- the first time that I realized it was the pain that kept me from the wonderful warm memories of our life together. Our relationship was anything but pain. I learned that the more I challenged my pain, the closer I felt to her. Kristen was just on the other side.

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*Our Children Remembered, May, 2020*

<i>Child</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Bereaved</i>
Garrett Artigiani		Joe & Anya Artigiani
Barbara Ann Balesteri		Mary Balesteri, Harry & Josie Ewing
Bode Derrin Barringer		DeAnn Wylie-Gonzalez
Meredith Kathryn Emma Bates		Laura & John Pattillo
Nino Angelo Bosco		Frauka Kozar
Madeleine Bourque		Suzanne Bourque
Michelle Gayle Carter		Cynthia Carter
Josh Clark		Susan Radelt
Zachary Andrew Clayton		David Clayton
Kevin C. Craft		Debbie & Curtis Craft
David Bradley Etling		Stephen Etling & Benjamin Bloodworth
Matthew Finzen		Barbara & Fritz Finzen
Neel Thomas Foon		Brad & Genie Foon
Peter Alexander Forstner		Kitty Forstner
Michael Chad Harris		Jerry & Trena Harris
Christopher Robin Hotchkiss		Radha Stern
Stefanie Helen Jacobs		Nanette Jacobs
Joanne Rae Kline		Donna & Sylvan Kline
Patrick Alan Kolsky		Alan & Linda Kolsky
Maximillian Letizi		Anthony & Terry Letizi
Sabrina Elizabeth Lew		Teri Miller
Adam Blake London		Trudie London
Jesse Colin Lux		Bobby Lux, Marcia Lux
Katherine N. Mackura		Jaeson & Kelly Mackura
Marco Antonio Joseph Martinez		Samuel Martinez & Brenda Bloomfield
Timothy Patrick McBride		Lois Kortum & George McBride
Erin Kathryn McEowen		Sandy & Jerry McEowen
Robert Scott McIntosh		Jennifer Holman McIntosh
Kevin Connor Olaeta		Lonnie Olaeta
Alexander Sol Olive		Judy Olive
Melody Rae Osheroff		Aaron Osheroff
Nicolas James Pitti		Robert & Rose Marie Longoria
Lindsey Opal Quinby		Paul Quinby, Jean Quinby Reiss
Ruby Rhea		Bertha Jean Schmidt
Anthony Joseph Rios		Barb Curtice
Ruby Salkeld		Cathie Merkel
Nicolas Simard		Julie Chabot & François Simard
Zackary Spencer Stuart		Michelle Stuart

Today I choose life. Every morning when I wake up I can choose joy, happiness, negativity, pain... To feel the freedom that comes from being able to continue to make mistakes and choices - today I choose to feel life, not to deny my humanity but embrace it. **Kevyn Aucoin**

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I have always believed, and I still believe, that whatever good or bad fortune may come our way we can always give it meaning and transform it into something of value. **Hermann Hesse**

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Gone yet not forgotten, although we are apart, your spirit lives within me, forever in my heart.

- Author Unknown

*Our Children Remembered, June, 2020*

<i>Child</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Bereaved</i>
Peter Demetrius Alex		Bill & Pat Alex
Shane Arneson		Carolyn Beasley
Bode Derrin Barringer		DeAnn Wylie-Gonzalez
Sean Behan		Gerri & Robert Behan
Matthew Buckley		Mark & Kristina Buckley
Stephen Anthony Castaldo		Joanne Castaldo
Aura Celeste		Joshua Nagler
Zachary Andrew Clayton		David Clayton
Daniel Keith Cracchold		Linda Winslow
Chloë Sabrina Dator		Dani Dator
Nina Embervine		Barbara McNeil
Kristopher Manuel Espinoza		Kristina Espinoza, Judy Duenas
Jason Paul Ewing		Harry & Josie Ewing
"Ryan" Stephan Fyles		Susan & Dale Fyles
Lori Ann Elizabeth Gentry		Genesse & Bill Gentry
William Turner Gundry		Karen Gundry Smith & Frank Gundry
Peter Alexander Helldoerfer		Peter Helldoerfer, Kathleen Freitag
Savannah Louise Hill		Andrea Hill
Janet Suzanne Hoch		Linda & Peter Hoch
Rodrigues Julian		Connie Rodrigues
Rodrigues Juliana		Connie Rodrigues
Dylan Clarke Krings		Randy & Sioux Krings
Jesse Colin Lux		Marcia Lux, Bobby Lux
Michael Allen Mannheimer		Shirlee J. Newman
Richard C. Mannheimer, Jr.		Shirlee J. Newman, Richard Mannheimer, Sr.
Lori Margo Meislin		Barbara J. Meislin
Eli Thomas Olaeta		Lonnie Olaeta
Isabella Maria Pizzuti		Anmarie & Josephine Pizzuti
Nicholas Plaskon		John & Berit Lelas
Lonnie Roper II		Shirlee Roper
Jordyn Royall		Michelle Royall & Colin Fleumer
Nevra Rubenstein		Janet Rubenstein, Zev Rubenstein
Theodore "Teddy" James Russell		Anne & Tim Russell
Kyle Aaron Scourbys		Bill & Kimberly Scourbys
Adam James Parks Steinberg		Ella & Steve Steinberg
Jackson Jonathan-Michael Talbott		Meghan & Jason Talbott
Aurora Alice Turnbaugh		Sandra Maxwell & Kevin Turnbaugh
Spencer Wood		Rich & Denise Wood
Nathan Hall Wright		Elizabeth Wright

"We bereaved are not alone. We belong to the largest company in all the world--the company of those who have known suffering." — **Helen Keller**

"The griefs that have been hardest for me were the ones I didn't recognize as griefs, because they came in what were supposed to be the best times of my life. No one whispered in my ear that the best times, the ones that change our lives, are woven with the thread of loss."  
— **Anna White, Mended: Thoughts on Life, Love, and Leaps of Faith**

"Mourning is never really complete. The mappings of the old play remain in the cortex, like those mappings of the phantom limb."  
— **Robert A Berezin**

## Love Gifts

Love Gifts are "messages" published in our newsletter that honor children who have died. We are grateful to parents, grandparents and others who, by their Love Gifts donations, allow us to offer resources such as the Annual Candle Lighting Event, the newsletter, books, brochures and pamphlets at no cost to assist bereaved families. They also allow us to provide information to professionals and others who impact the lives and feelings of the bereaved. The donation amount is your choice.

### We have received the following Love Gifts for the May/ June newsletter:

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Donor/s: Frauka Kozar  
Child: Nino Angelo Bosco  
Dates: 5/30/89 - 7/17/19

Donor/s: Family  
Child: Benjamin von Sternenfels Rosenthal

Donor/s: Jeff & Michelle Leopold, Parker & Friends  
Child: Trevor Leopold  
Dates: 1/30/01 - 11/17/19

Donor/s: Barbara Fivis  
Child: Willy Fivis  
Dates: 1/30/90 - 6/29/14  
"Loving the beautiful spirit of my son Willy."

The following love gift was received too late for the March/April Newsletter:

Donor/s: Moe & Gloria Cevallos  
Child: Matthew Cevallos  
Dates: 4/1970-12/2006  
"You are in our hearts today and everyday. We miss you. We love you. Happy birthday, son. Love, Mom and Dad."

Deadlines for Love Gift information for Newsletters:

Jan/Feb issue	Dec. 15	Jul/Aug issue	Jun. 15
Mar/Apr issue	Feb. 15	Sep/Oct issue	Aug. 15
May/Jun issue	Apr. 15	Nov/Dec issue	Oct. 15

## A Friend

I have a friend  
who never married,  
who never had a child.

She never lost a husband,  
as I did;  
She never lost a child,  
as I did.

Last night I wept for my friend.

Gwen Brown  
TCF Winnipeg, Canada



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### NOTE:

Photographs for the annual Candle Lighting Ceremony Slide Show presentation need to be submitted no later than October 31 or there will not be time to add them to the Slide Show.

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### Love Gift Form:

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Donor's name \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Birthdate & Anniversary Date \_\_\_\_\_

Newsletter month \_\_\_\_\_

Message \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Include your name, address and phone # if not on check in case of questions:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Mail the information above along with your donation (check) made payable to TCF/Marin  
to: TCF/Marin c/o Love Gifts, P.O. Box 150935, San Rafael, CA 94915.

## Father's Day

I just finished watching another miserable cologne commercial on TV. For some reason these are the first signs of the upcoming holiday, commercials that are only shown at Christmas and Father's Day to give wives and kids some idea of what to get Dad to celebrate a gift-oriented holiday.

Like the other fathers who read this newsletter, I know the gift I'd like to get this Father's Day, just as I know there is no way that it will happen. My son's life. An opportunity not to hurt when I see boys who are the age my son should be now. A chance to dream those dreams for that little boy again. But that's not going to happen. Instead I will get up on that day, having called and wished my father a happy day the night before, and go to the florist for the flowers I will place on my son's grave. I will stand alone and cry for a time, then return home to my wife and our infant son. This year will have a greater measure of peace due to young Dan's arrival, but I shall always have that Alex-sized hole in my soul, a longing that I know I will have until I too die.

Like many bereaved fathers I have felt the lack of understanding of the non-bereaved on how a father should mourn his child's death, and for how long. I do not understand how a society can have such belief in the strength of maternal love, and do such a good job of ignoring the intensity of paternal love. From the people whose only question at Alex's memorial service was on how my wife was dealing with this tragedy, to the long-time friend who didn't understand my choking up after watching a Hallmark Card commercial last year, the majority of people around us seem to have difficulty with the thought that a father may need to grieve for his deceased child just as much as a mother might.

So that is where some support and love is needed, and needed badly. Of course we have Compassionate Friends, but something more personal and closer to home is needed. In a recent newsletter there was a note from a bereaved mother from New Jersey asking fathers and siblings to be understanding of a grieving mother's needs on Mother's Day. I agree, but I would also hope that you ladies will not forget your husbands this Father's Day as well. It is frequently said that we males don't often talk of our emotional needs, and are reluctant to show our pain, but we need love and 'warm fuzzies' when we hurt also. Please remember us on Father's Day Sunday, and please remember also that those cute little sentimental commercials that hurt you in May, take their toll on us in June. There are definitely times when I can do without Old Spice, McDonalds, Hallmark, and AT&T.

Brothers, I wish you peace, comfort, and love.

Doug Hughes  
TCF Cincinnati, OH  
In Memory of my son, Alex,

## A Bear Hug for Father's Day

As Father's Day approaches, we are reminded of the significant contributions and unique love of fathers and stepfathers. Their defined role, after the death of their children, is to support their wives and surviving children. But their pain is deep.

Men, by their nature and in response to our society's expectations, do not usually grieve as openly as women. They do not talk as candidly about their loss. They generally do not reach out to others for comfort. They are, after all, the rock, the solid center of the family. Their wife's pain supersedes their pain because women are fragile. Or so we are told.

Yet, as I look into the eyes of so many bereaved fathers, I see a deep, gripping pain. The tears left unshed, the words that are never spoken, the anger, guilt and agony....all remain in the eyes of the bereaved father.

What can a father do? Talk with other bereaved fathers. Read books written by bereaved fathers. Talk with spouses, private counselors and close friends who are not as structured in their "male" societal roles. Try to attend three meetings of Compassionate Friends. You don't have to talk. But you might decide to express a single thought or idea, logically presented, to the small group. You might find peace in this place, and then again, you might not. But, as my own dad often said, "Step up to the plate and see what happens." He was a pretty wise man.....a child of the depression, a football player, Greatest Generation, WW II Marine, a fighter, a provider, a protector.....a man's man. He endured much in his 78 years, and I only saw him cry a few times.

But when his friend lost a child, my tough dad was the first one to reach out with a bear hug that wouldn't let go until the tears began to flow. They both cried. They both knew that the agony of losing a child was far worse than the horrors of war. Together, they cried.

Happy Father's Day....May your bear hugs be many and your memories become sweeter with each passing year. May your child live forever in your heart so that peace embraces you always.

Annette Mennen Baldwin  
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen  
And my father, James M. Mennen  
TCF, Katy, TX

## Endowment

Hope gives us vision for regaining the tenderness of memories.  
Hope carries us through to survival and healing.

Hope offers us courage for acceptance and overcoming.  
Hope gives us new spirit and new laughter.

Hope is among the greatest gifts to be found in time of sorrow.  
But hope cannot restore on earth what is lost to death.  
Hope can only go forward and make us new.

Give space to hope in your life.



Sascha Wagner  
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From LARGO, Fall 2001



**The Compassionate Friends**  
**Marin County Chapter**  
**Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

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 San Rafael, CA 94915

**MAY—JUNE, 2020**

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**Dated Material - Please Deliver Promptly**



**Do Not Stand At My Grave And Weep**

Do not stand at my grave and weep  
 I am not there. I do not sleep.  
 I am a thousand winds that blow.  
 I am the diamond glints on snow.  
 I am the sunlight on ripened grain.  
 I am the gentle autumn rain.  
 When you awaken in the morning's hush  
 I am the swift uplifting rush  
 Of quiet birds in circled flight.  
 I am the soft stars that shine at night.  
 Do not stand at my grave and cry;  
 I am not there. I did not die.

*Mary Elizabeth Frye, 1905 - 2005*

**Like the Butterfly**

It fluttered above my head  
 Weightless in the soft breeze.  
 I reached up my hand  
 It lit on my finger.

Waving glistening wings gently,  
 It looked at me for timeless moments.  
 I smiled, reaching deep and  
 Finding all those cherished memories.

As it flitted off through the sunlit morn,  
 I knew we had said hello once more.

Leslie Langford  
 TCF, North Platte, NE

