



DOES THE PAIN STOP?

Rhonda Henshaw, Maumelle, AR

I never thought the day would come when I would stop asking for the pain to stop, but somewhere along the way, I did. Don't get me wrong, I still have days where the pain is still in full swing, but it's not constant or as intense. It's like the hurricane is over and the waves of grief come less often, don't hit as hard, and don't last as long...and sometimes they turn into gentle waves of calming memories. Charlotte has always said she feels blessed and I never understood how she could say that, but now I feel blessed.

Blessed that I am still alive and I'm actually happy about it. Wow! And blessed that I had my precious son in my life for as long as I did. I really never thought this day would come. Dave loved the water as much as I do, and now when the sun is shining and the water is glistening, I think he is smiling down on me. At night when the moon is bright, he tells me he loves me and says, "Good night!"

May your storm end soon and may you survive. We are here to help you pick up the pieces or just get through the day, as sometimes there doesn't seem like there are any pieces left to pick up.

*Rhonda is David Mitchell Henshaw's mom.
David 2/5/1984 - 6/21/2002*



FROM DESOLATION TO HEALING, THE BEREAVED'S TRUE WORK

Don Hackett (1993)

These are the days when soul and heart assume the weight of more intense remembrance, stirring memories that carry those mystic qualities and moments of the closing days of a child's life.

It is May, soon to merge into June, and in that year of death, the hours of his living hastened to twilight, the final prelude to darkness.

It was 1982, long past, but still as immediate as yesterday. In early July, on the day of summer's first full moon, Olin passed away. His life abruptly ended. He died.

In the opening years of his absence, those weeks burned like a fire in the mind, a savage cycle of unrelenting agony, a constant, wandering journey on the pathways of goodbye.

Even now, eleven years later, recall frequently ambles through the turnings of joy and regret that forever mark these months in the heart, but now healed, by ways of my spirit.

But, the significant concept has now appeared... healed. For healing is indeed the ultimate goal of mourning, the true work of the bereaved. With love as our talisman, the world of healing and reinvestment at last stands revealed. Our living can finally attest to the beauty granted our lives through the caress of our child's love upon us. And this is true regardless of their time with us, be that duration short or long.

Healing is available for all of us. We know we need to achieve it. Often we strive for it unconsciously, sensing that securing it will at least grant us ease from unbearable mental and even physical pain.

But, healing is even more. It is freedom! We are freed of our entrapment in just the death of our child or children. We regain their lives and all the warming of our hearts those remembered moments provide.

Healing is also our recognition that continuing to live, with new goals and aspirations, does not constitute disloyalty to our dead. We who loved them continue to do so, even though our lives are forever altered by their dying.

We come to realize through our healing that love is the only commodity we can continually give and still increase its availability within us. It is this constant unfolding of love that finally enables and bestows our healing. Today, as I pause, however frequently, and gaze into a past of utter desolation, I know my love for Olin has endured. I sense, on a level beyond explanation, that love reciprocated. This love, in both aspects, has provided my ability to heal.

As I close this reflection of those months long ago, I can sense again the death of joy, the cessation of wonder, the real and marked period to my own survival. However, I feel confidence in my love once more. Love has restored my sense of self and I cling with rediscovered joy to my worth as a parent.

In the shadows of yesterday, I see again the light of life and know my healing is secure. It can be secure for all of us. And when we at last achieve it, we find again the beauty of the world, and know with utter certainty that somehow our child's life has enriched that beauty beyond our knowing.

Don & Kathy's son, Olin, died in 1982.