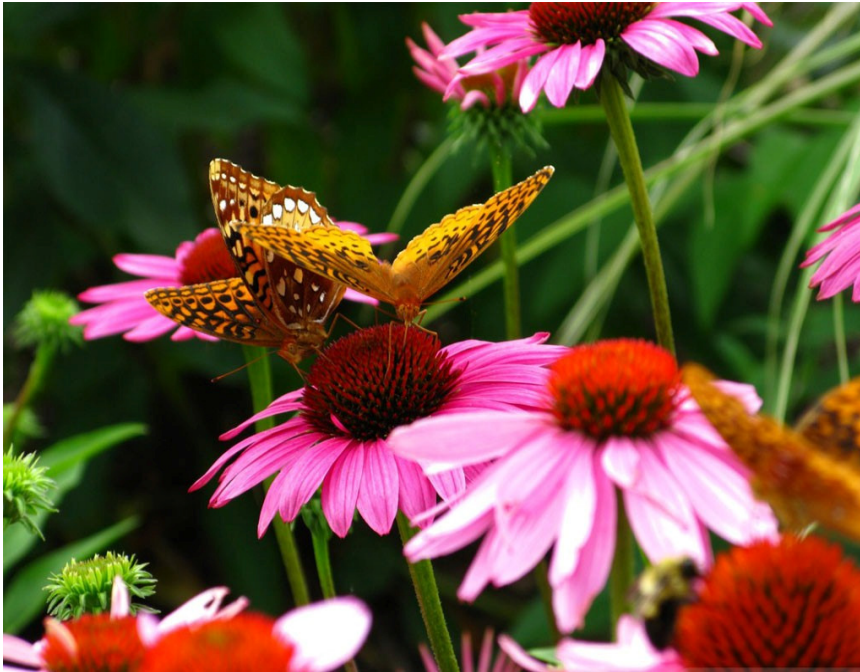




# Haven Herald



## Loss of a Parent by Jill Bellacicco

The death of a parent is usually the first major loss in a person's life. It is shocking and often emotionally overwhelming. Even if the relationship has been difficult or dysfunctional, a parent's death changes our place in the world. We may become caretakers for the surviving parent or take on new roles in the family structure. The person who knew you first, regardless of the relationship, is no longer a part of your life.

Losing a parent may bring complications along with sadness and guilt. We may think we will have plenty of time to be with our parents, but things can change quickly. When my father died suddenly sixteen years ago, I was in a state of shock and denial. How could this happen? He was always supposed to be a part of my life. Eleven years later, my mother died after a long illness while under Hospice care. Each experience was unique and neither was easy. I still miss my parents every day, but I have learned, by taking time to grieve my losses, that I can appreciate and remember my parents while continuing to go on with my life.

## Letter from the Executive Director

While winter yields to new growth and beauty as spring approaches, we welcome warmer, longer days during this change of season. At Haven, we are welcoming new volunteers from our January training class, preparing for our spring six-week support groups, and doing a little spring cleaning.

I often think of my mother at this time of year. She passed away around Mother's Day five years ago. I miss celebrating Mother's Day with her, but over time the sense of loss and sadness has given way to reflection and appreciation.

This issue of the newsletter addresses the unique experience of parental loss. I am reminded that the change of season can often bring these losses to mind and to heart. Taking time to reflect on a joyful memory can be comforting. I encourage all of you not only to enjoy this beautiful spring but also to take a little time to remember the past and the loved ones who were such an important part of your life.

Jill Bellacicco

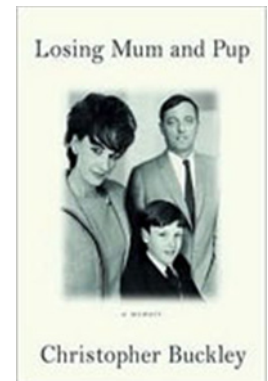
*Thank you to all who contributed to our Campaign Fund, enabling us to make needed structural repairs in our basement. Special thanks go to St. Mark's, whose generous contribution supports the printing of our 2013 newsletter.*



*Losing Mum and Pup* by Christopher Buckley  
Reviewed by Mary Smith

Christopher Buckley, an only child, has written a witty and touching memoir about his famous parents, William F. Buckley and Patricia Taylor Buckley. His father was the conservative author and commentator, founder of the political magazine *National Review* and host of the TV show *Firing Line*. His mother was the glamorous New York socialite, charity fundraiser *extraordinaire* and member of the Best-Dressed Hall of Fame.

Buckley tells the story of the last year of his parents' lives and of their deaths and funerals while reflecting back on growing up with his parents. He relates their complicated relationships and regales us with stories of his parents' famous and not-so-famous friends (Henry Kissinger and David Niven, to name just two). *Losing Mum and Pup* brought tears to my eyes and made me laugh out loud.



While Buckley's memoir is entertaining due to its polite gossip of famous people, it is also poignant. His concern for his parents' well-being, their dignity at the end, the value of their memorial services, and his grief over their deaths are real. As he writes: "I think about them every day, and not—I venture—because I have been at work on this book. Writing it (I suspect) was intended to enable catharsis; now, as I reach the end, it seems to me that I may have written it out of a more basic need: as an excuse to spend more time with them before letting go—if, indeed, one ever really lets them go."

I highly recommend *Losing Mum and Pup* to anyone interested in the fascinating Buckley family and their famous friends, but especially to anyone who has suffered the loss of their parents.

What Worked For Me  
by Sharlene Aukofer

My mother died June 1, 2012, not very long ago.

We had a complicated relationship. She was born in 1919 and grew up during the Great Depression. Her father died when she was six. Her mother and two older brothers spoiled her, and she remained spoiled all her life. Even as an adult, she used childish maneuvers in her relationships.

But she was my mother, and although I often didn't like her, I loved her. She lived with me for the last 16 years of her life. Now that she's gone I still act as if she's at home. As I approach the small apartment that we built for her in my home, I still call out, "Coming in." She was blind and I didn't want to scare her. Now when I leave the house, I often call out "good-bye" to her.



In the apartment, I talk to her as if she's still there. Her mother—my grandmother—had a Greek Orthodox altar in her home, and I remember that my grandmother often prayed there. When I moved my mother here from Wisconsin, I found the altar in her basement. I moved it to a special corner in our family room. I saw my mother praying there many times, and still today I can visualize her standing at the altar saying her prayers.

Because of our complex relationship, I have many issues to resolve. I sometimes sit on the couch opposite her chair and talk to her, trying to resolve in my mind the issues in our relationship, and this helps.



## Adult Loss of a Parent

by Sandra McCauley

The loss of a parent follows the same pattern as other losses, but there are differences. What makes this type of grief different from other grief? What are the “losses behind the loss” that you may want to explore when dealing with the death of a parent?

**\*The “abandoned child” problem.** You may feel an overall increased sense of vulnerability. Childlike tears and feelings of being “lost” may surface. It won’t matter whether you are 40, 50, or 60, married with kids or not, you may feel cruelly abandoned. After all, Mom and Dad, being immortal, have always been there.

**\*The “I’m-next-in-line-to-die” problem.** The realization of your own mortality may hit like an earthquake. Such a cataclysm may lead to the next problem.

**\*The “mid-life identity crisis” problem.** You may feel the need to take a hard look at the “big picture” of your life and ask yourself some questions. “What have I been doing all these years?” “What’s really important to me?” It’s time for a serious clarification of your values, which may in turn lead to other losses.

**\*The “there’s no-place-like-home” problem.** The family home and belongings are often sold and dispersed when a parent dies. Now there’s no place to gather for Thanksgiving, no reason to go back to the hometown over summer. You may feel much more than the loss of the person: you may feel as though an emotional umbilical cord has been severed, that the connection to your very “roots” has been lost.

**\*The “Mom-always-liked-you-best” problem.** There’s nothing like the death of a parent to upset family dynamics. Long-buried sibling rivalries may surface. Unnerving role reversals may take place.

**\*The “unfinished-business” problem.** What words did you leave unspoken before your parent died? What parent-child problems were not repaired? You may also be mourning your parent’s past and carrying your parent’s regrets.

**\*The “unfinished future-business” problem.** Are you mourning what might have been the dead parent’s future? The father who will not be there to walk his daughter down the aisle on her wedding day? The grandmother who will not see her grandson graduate from college?

**\*The “get-over-it” problem.** Often, adults who have lost a parent face a lack of support. The logic behind this is, “after all, you’re an adult... the parent was old/sick... it’s expected, and it’s “natural,” right?” But it often doesn’t feel natural; it feels much the opposite.

These are just some of the “losses behind the loss” when a parent dies. Exploring these issues with others can help relieve the guilt, justify the anger, and unscramble the confusion. You may give yourself permission to feel and to grieve like a child as you begin to shape a new identity as an adult.



### HOW HAVEN IS FUNDED

Haven is classified by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. It is funded mainly by donations from individuals in the community who wish to support our work and by those who donate in memory of a loved one. Donations are tax deductible. If you are interested in making a donation, please contact Haven at (703) 941-7000 or at [havenofnova@verizon.net](mailto:havenofnova@verizon.net)



## Spring Schedule

Six-week General Bereavement Support Group  
Tuesday, April 9 – May 14, 2013  
7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Six-week Suicide Loss Support Group  
Wednesday, April 10 – May 15, 2013  
7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Six-week Widow/Widower Support Group  
Saturday, April 13 – May 18, 2013  
2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Call or email Haven to register for the above groups.

Drop-in Suicide Loss Support Group  
1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month  
11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

*Haven also offers individual support by phone and in person; please call to schedule an appointment. For immediate support without an appointment, a volunteer is available on a walk-in basis Monday through Friday between 10:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.*

### Contact Information

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### Hours of Operation

Monday through Friday  
9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.  
[www.havenofnova.org](http://www.havenofnova.org)

Messages may be left on our voicemail after hours

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Annandale, Virginia 22003

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