

# The Journey

For Survivors of Fallen Firefighters

JULY 2003 ISSUE 2

## WILL I EVER FEEL BETTER AGAIN?

**I**t's a common question from people facing the loss of a loved one: Most survivors agree that it takes a long time and that, in some ways, loss changes us forever. Still, people find their way through to brighter days and a sense of hope.

One of the best descriptions of grief that we have heard is from our dear friend Rev. Bevon Smith, whose firefighter son Paul died in the line of duty in 1989. Rev. Smith compares grief to a hundred pound block of ice on your chest. Over

time, sometimes very slowly, that ice melts a bit. It may melt so much that eventually all you have left is a 10-pound block of ice. But that small weight remains with you, a reminder of your loss and the person you loved.

*Here are some thoughts survivors have shared with us about their experiences.*

### How did you know you were starting to heal?

*I knew I was starting to heal when I started sleeping through the night again. Daughter 2002*

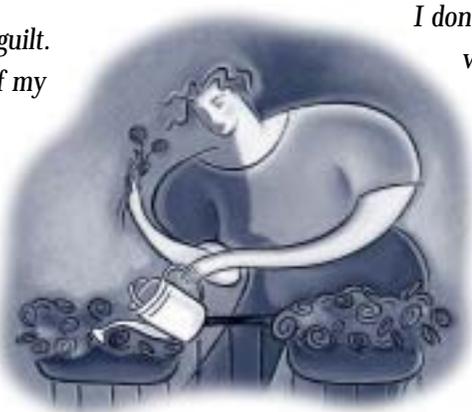
*We felt healing taking place when we were able to smile again. Parents 1994*

*I knew I was getting better when I could laugh without guilt. For so long it was as if finding any joy was a betrayal of my husband's life. It took a long time to enjoy things again. Wife 2000*

*Returning home from my first grief counseling session, I remember thinking, "Oh, how I wish this feeling would stay with me!" I had a glimmer of hope, a reprieve from the darkness, a realization that I would make it. Wife 1999*

*My husband and I were volunteers in the same company. The point that I knew I'd be OK? That's easy. Some time during my EMT course when I realized I had gained the guys' respect, not for being Keith's wife, but for who I had become—me. Wife 2000*

*I must be healing because I can talk about my husband without tears running down my face. Not every day is a great day, but they aren't as bad as they were a year ago. Wife 2001*



*I don't know if I have healed. I keep very, very busy. My hope has always been in the Lord, and I knew He would take care of me and I would be OK. Wife 2000*

*The first time I passed the anniversary day in a month without having it dominate my whole day was when I*

*thought things were getting better. Sister 1999*

*Just one day it is easier to breathe and easier to look at the world around you. No one can give you a timeline. There are no rules. Wife 1999*



We hope you enjoy reading the Journey. Send your comments and suggestions to:

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## Are there things that are still difficult?

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Night is the worst. [Wife 1997](#)

I got married seven months ago, and not having my dad with me was hard. [Daughter 1995](#)

I don't know if I've really healed yet. I do find I'm not crying at the drop of a hat anymore, but there are still times...

I definitely don't do well when I hear certain songs. [Wife 2001](#)

I still find supertime and evenings tough, along with school vacations. [Wife 2001](#)

I don't think you ever get over a loss like this. The pain is not so sharp, but there is still pain. [Mother 1998](#)

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## Have you grown in ways you had not expected?

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Finding a life without my husband is still hard. It took me a very long time to realize that I could come and go as I wanted.

After almost 35 years of marriage, being my own person is still a learning experience.

[Wife 2000](#)

Hope came through family and friends and still does after almost 10 years of being without the love of my life. I went back to college and am now working, have a beautiful granddaughter, and try to fill each day as if it were my last. [Wife 1993](#)



Reaching out to others who have lost a firefighter has been the best medicine or therapy I could have. Talking about Kenny and helping other families honor their firefighters... what a legacy to my son!  
[Mother 1992](#)

Volunteer work has filled the void left by children getting older. Giving time to others helps anyone feel more alive and needed. Looking outward, instead of inward at self, puts the focus in a healthier place, I feel. [Wife 1982](#)

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## Do you feel the continuing presence of your loved one?

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My son never picked up pennies when he changed jeans. I would put them in a jar for him. Now when I find a penny, I can feel his presence, as if he put that penny there to let me know he's still around and with us. [Mother 1996](#)

I talk with my son all the time and feel him with me when I need him or am at a low point. I have to believe that he still lives on in a better place and I will be with him again.

[Mother 1993](#)

The day I spied a fire truck on a back country road was the day I knew everything would be OK. These days, no matter where I am, a fire truck appears. It is my son's way of telling me, "Hello, and I love you." [Mother 1994](#)

I have so many great memories of my son, and I still talk about him every day. I thank God for the time I had with him.  
[Mother 1998](#)

Even though the pain gets better, there's never a day that goes by that I don't think of my husband. As anyone knows who's married to a firefighter, they are a special breed of person. Though they are heroes to their community, they're even more of a hero to their families. [Wife 1988](#)

He built our house, so his presence is everywhere. I see him wherever I look, and I talk to him. His boots sat by the front door right where he left them for the first six months. I just needed to see them there. [Wife 2000](#)

He's still right beside me and our children every single day.

[Wife 1997](#)