

# ▶ Monthly Newsletter

**November/December 1996**

## *Table of Contents*

- [M.E.N.D. Is Formed](#)
- [When There Are No Answers \(Poem\)](#)
- [Our Stories](#)
- [Resource Reviews](#)
- [A Song for Rebekah's Parents \(Song\)](#)
- [In Loving Memory](#)
- [Future Newsletter Topics/Submission Deadlines](#)



*Praying today that  
in the silent moments  
you will find peace  
in knowing God's  
promises are true.*

[Acknowledgements](#)

## ▶ **M.E.N.D. Is Formed**

As the founder of M.E.N.D., I would like to welcome you to this newly formed organization and tell you how it began. After the stillbirth of my second child, Jonathan, I quickly realized what a great need there was to reach out and minister to women who have suffered the loss of a baby. Although I had wonderful support from my family and friends, I still felt very alone in my grief. Just before I reached the one year anniversary of my baby's death, I found the Internet support group, *infanlos*. It was there that I finally felt free to share some of my innermost thoughts and feelings with women who knew exactly how I felt. As time passed, I developed a burning desire to bring this "mommies only" type of support group out of cyberspace and into the real world where we could share face-to-face.

Although we all come from different backgrounds and have different stories to tell, we have gone through the same initiation that made us members of the same "club." My desire for this organization is for those of us who know the sufferings of losing a precious baby to either miscarriage, stillbirth or early infant death to join together to offer compassion and support to one another. And I pray "...that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" (2 Corinthians 1:4). It is also the goal of this organization to provide you with resource information pertaining to pregnancy and infant loss that was helpful to us. I hope that as you travel down the road of grief and mourning, you will find solace in this group of *Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death*.

Rebekah Mitchell

## When There Are No Answers

Life will bring us questions  
without answers;

To live is to encounter  
silent seasons of the soul,

When every prayer  
will seem to go unanswered

As we face events beyond  
our understanding or control.

Yet in the quiet darkness,  
Christ is working.

His silence in the shadows  
doesn't mean He doesn't care;

A part of faith is trusting  
without reason,

Believing, when He can't be seen  
or heard, that He's still there...

So when answers fail to come,  
don't be discouraged.

Keep leaning on His steadfast love  
and trusting in His will,

For knowing why won't really  
make a difference -

But growing close  
and knowing Jesus will.

B.J. Hoff

[Return to the Table of Contents](#) 

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## Our Stories

*This first issue of the M.E.N.D. newsletter is not only to introduce you to the organization but also to acquaint you with us, the organizers, and our beloved babies.*

*We hope that as you read the following stories, it will lessen the loneliness that you may be feeling and find comfort in the fact that there truly are other women who know your same heartache and pain.*

- [Rebekah Mitchell](#)
- [Laurie Ottinger](#)
- [Stacey Lange](#)
- [Katherine Middlebrook](#)
- [Lynne Böer](#)

[Return to the Table of Contents](#) 

## **Rebekah's Story**

Soon after my husband, Byron, and I were married, I was diagnosed with a degenerative kidney disease. We had our first child, Byron, Jr., three-and-a-half years later and although I had several problems during my pregnancy, he was delivered full-term and very healthy.

Shortly after his third birthday, I expressed an interest to my doctors to have another baby. However, they were a little apprehensive about allowing me to get pregnant again because I had lost some kidney function since my first baby. I was informed of the potential hazards of my body going through another pregnancy and was reminded of my highrisk status, but was told the decision was mine.

Byron and I prayed about it and in faith conceived our second child. I began having complications very early in the pregnancy. My blood pressure continued to stay elevated despite the medications I was taking. We were delighted to discover that our baby was a boy and we decided to name him Jonathan Daniel. The name Jonathan means precious gift from God which is what we truly believe he was and still is.

I was thankfully able to sustain my pregnancy without bed rest until I was 24 weeks gestation. We then moved in with my parents until I was hospitalized three weeks later. It was becoming evident that the pregnancy was causing me to lose kidney function and my doctors were afraid I could go into kidney failure. It was thus the recommendation of some of my doctors to deliver Jonathan to ensure my health. However, my kidneys somewhat stabilized, and I was able to carry him for three more weeks while in the hospital.

Just before I reached 30 weeks, my kidney specialist came in to the room to tell me my lab report was bad and to expect the baby to be delivered within the next couple of days. Although that still meant Jonathan would be very premature, I was grateful that I had made it this far.

Within a few minutes of him telling me this, the nurse came in my room to do routine vitals on Jonathan and me. The next several minutes quickly became a blurry nightmare as she struggled to find his heartbeat. A few other procedures were done until an ultrasound confirmed the death of my little baby. Several hours later, I had a C-section and my otherwise perfect 2 lb. 12 oz. baby was born with the umbilical cord around his head, body and legs; his death had absolutely nothing to do with my kidney disease. Five days later, we buried our precious gift from God next to his great-grandfather, Daniel.

The weeks and months that followed were filled with deep heartache and sorrow. Although I will never understand why we have to endure such tragedies on this earth nor will I ever get over the pain of losing Jonathan, I am filled with great peace and assurance that he is safe in the arms of Jesus and will never have to know the pain and sufferings of this life. And what a blessing it is to know that we will spend eternity with him in what is now his home.

Rebekah Mitchell

## Laurie's Story

My daughter, Cailey Elizabeth Ottinger, was stillborn on June 7, 1996, at 8:19 a.m.

George and I were very excited when the EPT test came back with a "+" last November. Our dream of having a baby had finally come true! In February we found out we were having a girl! We were so excited! I couldn't wait to do all those "girl" things with her! We planned the nursery: Classic Pooh. The baby showers were just icing on the cake; we wanted to share our wonderful joy with all our friends and family!

As May neared to an end, everything was ready. The nursery was set up and stocked with all the necessary baby things.

On June 5, Cailey wasn't moving much so I went to my OB to get checked out. No heartbeat could be found with the doppler so an ultrasound was performed. No heartbeat was found and it was determined that she had died within the previous 12 hours. It was so hard to tell George that his baby was gone! It took nearly 24 hours of pitocin-induced labor, but she finally came out. We got to hold her and bathe her. It was very comforting. She was \*so\* beautiful! She had so much (very) dark hair (and I'm a blonde!!) and a pretty face! Such beautiful hands and the longest fingers! At 35 1/2 weeks, she weighed 7 lbs. 2 oz. and was 19 1/2 inches long! ! ! We are finding comfort knowing she is with the Lord. But it sure does hurt! We hope to find strength to go on and try for a baby again.

"Time stands still until we meet again." We miss you Cailey baby!

Laurie Ottinger

## Stacey's Story

"Relax," I kept telling myself, "you're just over anxious." I kept repeating the doctor's words in my head, "Remember, Stacey, the movements will slow down the last couple of weeks as your baby is preparing for his arrival." I kept hoping when my husband phoned the doctor that sunny Sunday morning to say I hadn't felt the baby move for over 24 hours that he (the doctor) would, in turn, just say I was simply a nervous expectant mother and he'd see me at my weekly appointment. Instead, he asked us to go to the hospital for a stress test.

Because we were just days away from my due date, we threw in my overnight bag and outfit to bring our little one home in "just in case," even though in the back of my mind, I felt like something wasn't right.

Our nurse, Karen, came in, introduced herself and began to search with the doppler to find our son's heartbeat, but there was only silence. She pushed and circled. I remember thinking to myself, "Surely she doesn't know what she's doing; that's why she can't find it." The charge nurse came in to see if she might have better luck. I could read it in her eyes as she circled

endlessly. The tears just welled and I started to shake. "Relax," they soothed, "let's get the doctor in here to do an ultrasound and see what he says." Tears came for our doctor as well when he told us our precious child had died.

After a fairly easy delivery the next day (Memorial Day), our son, Griffen Douglas, was born. He entered the world without letting out that newborn cry that we were so anxious to hear. I do remember the words our delivery doctor had for us just seconds after our son arrived. "He's perfect," he said, "just perfect." Our son was perfect. At 6lbs. 9 oz. and 21 inches long, he was tall and lean with a fuzzy layer of strawberry blond hair.

Griffen's death was due to a cord accident. I had an amazingly long umbilical cord measuring 146cm (three times the normal length), and although it had wrapped around him several times, they believe the site, where the umbilical cord met his belly, hemorrhaged due to prolonged stress. They say it's like getting struck by lightning, a "fluke", but it doesn't make it any easier.

My husband, Douglas, and I are looking forward to having more children, but we will always remember our first born with a special kind of love that only a parent who has lost a child can understand. We find comfort that our son is in heaven with his grandmother and that we will someday hold him in our arms again.

Stacey Lange

[Return to the List of Our Stories](#) 

### **Katherine's Story**

It was just an ordinary day when we received an extraordinary surprise...we were pregnant with our third child. It was unexpected but we were thrilled. The first two pregnancies were carefree and produced two wonderful boys. This time it was a baby girl. After 23 weeks of happiness and expectation, on December 9, 1993, our little girl died. The cord had twisted so much that she was unable to get any food. Although this was the most difficult thing we have ever been through, her brief life changed all of ours. We will never look at life the same way again. I will never take my two sons' lives for granted. God and prayer are much more real to me now. Some day we will see our precious Rebekah Ann in heaven.

Katherine Middlebrook

[Return to the List of Our Stories](#) 

### **Lynne's Story**

When I was four months pregnant, I went for an office visit with a genetic counselor and for a Level II sonogram with a neonatologist. Originally declining an amniocentesis, I listened to the genetic counselor and asked questions, feeling okay with the statistics she had given me. When the physician began doing the sonogram, to my horror, he began listing one problem after another with our baby -- hole in the heart, mass in the cord, intestines not inside the body where they should be, and arms and legs not measuring as far along in the pregnancy as they should be.

Needless to say, I was devastated. I felt like I had been run over by a MACK truck. My husband and I consented to an amniocentesis the next day due to the fact that they suspected a chromosome problem and said that the pediatric surgeons would want to know what the

chromosome make up of the baby was before some of them would consider surgery.

For almost two weeks, we prayed and waited on the results that would tell us if our baby had a problem that was incompatible with life or if he had problems that could be corrected and would allow him to live.

It was a difficult two weeks that ended with the phone call that confirmed the worst. Michael had Trisomy 18, which is incompatible with life. We were going to lose our son to death. It was only a matter of time. We were told 30% of Trisomy 18 babies don't make it from this point to term. The ones that do live only live a short while. Their little bodies just have too many problems that make their chance of survival very slim.

After much prayer and discussion, we decided to continue the pregnancy and allow God to handle it. We then began to prepare for the worst and hope for the best. We made funeral and cemetery arrangements, alerted family and friends to pray for us and then waited for the inevitable to happen.

We were graced with loving family and friends as well as compassionate medical professionals to help us through this time. Flipping the 30% statistic around, we assumed that we would be part of the 70% who did make it to term. Therefore, we were taken by surprise as the events surrounding Michael's death began to unfold.

I had an intense nesting instinct the Saturday and Sunday before Michael died. I completely rearranged and cleaned our other son and our daughter's bedrooms (with much help with the moving of furniture). My mother commented, "You know what happens when a mother gets the nesting instinct." We just brushed it off as coincidence. Little did we know how true it was to be.

I was feeling little movement that Sunday and felt none on Monday by the time I went in for my regular OB appointment. Our doctor was able to find a heartbeat though so we went on home. I continued to worry about Michael though.

The next morning I woke up in the middle of the night and couldn't go back to sleep for worrying about Michael. My husband and other son were also awake at this time, which we thought was strange. We feel as though Michael may have been saying goodbye at that time.

Later that morning, I woke up still not feeling any movement. I called the doctor and went in to hear the heartbeat. None was found by the nurse.

We then had a sonogram to confirm what I suspected. Michael had died. We went straight to the hospital to have labor induced. A little over 22 hours later, Michael was stillborn at 12:16 p.m. on July 17, 1996.

Lynne Böer

[Return to the List of Our Stories](#) 

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## Resource Reviews

● [A Silent Sorrow Pregnancy Loss \(Book\)](#)

- [SHARE \(National Organization\)](#)
- [Angel Unaware \(Music\)](#)
- [Molly's Rosebush \(Children\)](#)
- [Infanlos \(Internet\)](#)

**Note:** M.E.N.D. has no financial interest in any of these product reviews. The purpose in reviewing them here is to let others know what we have found to be helpful in our own situations so that you may find some comfort in these resources as well.

[Return to the Table of Contents](#) 

### **A Silent Sorrow Pregnancy Loss**

by Ingrid Kohn, M.S.W. and Perry-Lynn Moffitt with Isabelle A. Wilkins, M.D. Copyright, 1992.

*A Silent Sorrow* is an excellent book for both men and women who have experienced a pregnancy loss. This book covers aspects of all types of losses: early losses, such as miscarriage, molar and ectopic pregnancies, crisis pregnancies and losses, such as premature rupture of the membranes, pre-term labor, and cervical incompetence, as well as late losses, such as stillbirths and newborn deaths.

A *Silent Sorrow* discusses women's and men's grief as well as how it affects the parents' relationships. The loss of a pregnancy touches many and this book also discusses how the loss affects other children and the grandparents.

Other topics discussed are "Medical Care When You Lose Your Pregnancy," "Finding Solace In Your Religion," "The Response of Your Family And Friends," "The Impact of Pregnancy Loss On Your Career," "Pregnancy Loss And Infertility," and "Becoming Pregnant Again."

This book also includes rituals for parents of unborn and newborn babies who die. Many bereaved parents were interviewed for this book, and through their words you can find comfort and coping strategies for handling a pregnancy loss.

[Return to the List of Resources](#) 

### **SHARE**

SHARE. Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support, Inc.

**SHARE** is a national organization that publishes a bi-monthly newsletter for anyone who has experienced the loss of a baby.

To subscribe to this informative newsletter, contact their national office at:

National SHARE Office  
St. Joseph Health Center  
300 First Capitol Drive  
St. Charles, MO 63301-2893  
(314) 947-6164  
(800) 821-6819

## [Angel Unaware](#)

*Angel Unaware* beautifully expresses through song what many people may feel after the loss of a baby. *Angel Unaware* is one song recorded once on both sides of a tape. The tape may be purchased by writing to:

**HeartSong 96**  
P.O. Box 450204  
Garland, TX 75045-0204

You will need to enclose \$5.00 per tape plus 8.25% tax (if you live in Texas) along with your name and the address where you want the tape sent. Checks are made payable to HeartSong96.


[Return to the List of Resources](#) 

## [Molly's Rosebush](#)

by Janice Cohn, D.S.W.

*Molly's Rosebush* is a beautifully illustrated children's story about a little girl named Molly and her family and how they handle the issue of pregnancy loss. Molly's mom experiences a miscarriage. Molly's parents and grandmother help her to understand what has happened and let her know they feel sad and that it's okay for her to feel sad, too, and that other feelings are okay as well. Molly and her grandmother think of things to help Molly's mom feel better including giving her a hug and a kiss and buying a rose bush to plant.

This is a good book for parents to use with their children to explore the topic of pregnancy loss and includes an introduction for parents covering common questions parents have regarding how children are affected by a miscarriage and what reactions are "normal" for children in this situation.

[Return to the List of Resources](#) 

## [Infanlos](#)

*Infanlos* is a mailing list on the Internet that allows people with the common bond of pregnancy/infant loss to share experiences. To subscribe, send e-mail to: [majordomo@taex001.tamu.edu](mailto:majordomo@taex001.tamu.edu) and in the body of the text, type "subscribe".

[Return to the List of Resources](#) 

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## [A Song For Rebekah's Parents](#)

*Written by Clynt Taylor, December 1993, for Katherine and David Middlebrook*

There's a baby girl in Jesus' arms today.  
And lots of other children gathered 'round to see.



She's so peaceful and content in His embrace  
And His love and understanding shine forth from His face  
Assuring us, reminding us of His awesome love and grace.

Chorus. Jesus loves our children more than we do  
Even though it's hard to comprehend.  
Before there was time, He knew them one by one  
And the plans He has for them are His own.  
We are His stewards, but the children are His own.

Jesus looks into the hearts of those --  
Who were so well-prepared to love and care for her.

And His peace to them He gives an extra share  
And reminds us that He knows the pain and grief that they must bear.  
But as we call on Him in His faithfulness, He is always there.

Chorus. Jesus loves our children more than we do  
Even though it's hard to comprehend.  
Before there was time, He knew them one by one  
And the plans He has for them are His own.  
We are His stewards, but the children are His own.

[Return to the Table of Contents](#) 

## In Loving Memory...

### [Jonathan Daniel Mitchell](#)

Stillborn June 24, 1995  
Cord Accident

Donation in memory of  
Jonathan by his parents,  
Rebekah and Byron Mitchell  
and brother, Byron, Jr.

### [Rebekah Ann Middlebrook](#)

Stillborn December 9, 1993  
Cord Accident

Donation in Memory of  
Rebekah by her parents  
Katherine and David  
Middlebrook and brothers,  
William and Tucker.

### [Michael Joseph Böer](#)

### *Grateful Acknowledgement*

M.E.N.D. gratefully acknowledges gifts of love given in memory of a baby, relative, friend or given by someone just wanting to help. These donations help us to continue M.E.N.D.'s mission by providing our newsletter, web-site, and other services to bereaved parents free of charge. Please refer to the page entitled [M.E.N.D. Donations](#) for more information on where to send your donations and what information to include. **Thank you so much!**

Stillborn July 17, 1996  
Trisomy 18

Donation in memory of  
Michael by his parents, Lynne  
and Paul Böer and siblings,  
Paul, Jr. and Maggie.

### **Griffen Douglas Lange**

Stillborn May 27, 1996  
Cord Accident

Donation in memory of  
Griffen by his parents, Stacey  
and Doug Lange.

### **Cailey Elizabeth Ottinger**

Stillborn June 7, 1996

Donation in memory of Cailey  
by her parents Laurie and  
George Ottinger.

[Return to the Table of Contents](#) 

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## **Future Newsletter Topics/Submission Deadlines**

### **March/April Topic**

Others' Response to Your Loss  
Deadline - January 1, 1997

### **May/June Topic**

Mother's Day/Father's Day  
Deadline - March 1, 1997

*Stories, poems, thoughts and/or feelings regarding these topics are welcomed. Submissions must be received by the deadline to be considered for publication in the newsletter. Unfortunately, there is not enough room to include all submissions. Choices will be left to the discretion of the editors. Refer to the page entitled [Subscriptions](#) for the appropriate address to send your submission.*

[Return to the Table of Contents](#) 

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This page was last updated June 29, 1997.

For Questions or Comments, e-mail [Rebekah Mitchell](#).  
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