
BSTTW COMMUNITY NEWS

Volume 5 Issue 1

January 2005

BSTTW REBUILDING LIVES

BSTTW & National Institute of Burns in Ha Noi, Viet Nam Join Hands

By: Michael Appleman, CEO

During 2001-2002, BSTTW contacted the Vietnamese government about BSTTW being given the NGO status in Vietnam and helping their burn victims. The BSTTW Representative Nguyen Thi Dieu Tran contacted the PACCOM representative in Ho Chi Minh City (HCM), Viet Nam and explained that she was contacted by many Vietnamese citizens and several agencies requesting help for the burn victims in Viet Nam. PACCOM informed Ms. Tran that BSTTW needed to submit an application the documentation and information required in order to be reviewed, considered and accepted by PACCOM as an NGO in Viet Nam. Ms. Tran emailed the a list of the information needed to Mr. Michael Appleman, the BSTTW CEO in the USA. Mr. Appleman prepared and then mailed the PACCOM application and documents to Ms. Tran in HCM. When Ms. Tran received all the information, she contacted the PACCOM representative in HCM and asked him if she can submit BSTTW's application and documents to PACCOM in HCM. The representative informed Ms. Tran that all of the documentation must be sent to PACCOM's Ha Noi office. Ms. Tran was also told that the PACCOM HCM office wanted one copy for their records. Ms. Tran informed Mr. Appleman of

the situation and mailed everything to PACCOM in Ha Noi, Viet Nam.

Then in April 2002, Mr. Appleman arranged to travel to Viet Nam in order to meet with the United States Embassy officials and PACCOM in Ha Noi. When Mr. Appleman arrived at the San Nhat International Airport in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam , he was greeted by Ms. Tran and Nguyen Cong Thien.



A FAMILY AROUND THE WORLD

The US Government official at the US Embassy was very happy to see that BSTTW, an American non profit organization, was working in Viet Nam. The US Government felt that this type of help not only helps the Vietnamese burn victims but also shows the world that the American government and American people understand the need for their support and help in different areas around the world.

Mr. Appleman and Ms. Tran were told that the US Government offers BSTTW the best and to keep them informed PACCOM's decision about BSTTW's NGO status.

BSTTW then met with the officials from PACCOM. During the discussion with
CONTINUED Page 2 "VIET NAM"

Inside This Issue

-
- 1** Itch and The Burn Survivor

 - 2** Pig-Picking'...What?!? A Mother's First WBC...

 - 3** Insights and Revelations By Fire: Part II

 - 4** A Strong Feeling of Inspiration

 - 5** Hidden Beauty
-

CONTINUED From Page 1 “VIET NAM”
 PACCOM, BSTTW explained that the organization can offer to the burn survivor community in Viet Nam. Mr. Appleman and Ms. Tran offered several pictures of a young boy who was badly burned. Mr. Appleman explained that the family has requested BSTTW’s help. PACCOM informed BSTTW that Viet Nam has many other burn victims that need BSTTW’s help. PACCOM then stated that they needed to know the exact amount of financial funding BSTTW can donate to Viet Nam. Mr. Appleman informed PACCOM’s representatives of the estimated funding available for BSTTW’s work in Viet Nam. PACCOM informed Mr. Appleman and Ms. Tran that they felt BSTTW did not have enough funding for Viet Nam and due to that reason, PACCOM will not offer BSTTW the NGO status at that time. This was very upsetting news for Mr. Appleman, Ms. Tran, the BSTTW board of directors and the Vietnamese people. Mr. Appleman and Ms. Tran knew that the Vietnamese burn survivor community was in need of BSTTW’s help. Mr. Appleman and Ms. Tran thanked PACCOM for their time and the meeting was adjourned.

BSTTW also visited a burn unit in Ha Noi, traveled to several areas in South Viet Nam, and met with several burn victims.



For the next 1 ½ years, BSTTW continued to do whatever they could to help the Vietnamese burn survivor community. Then in 2004, BSTTW and the French-Vietnamese Hospital (FVH) in HCM agreed to have the first BSTTW Medical Internship Program. BSTTW sent three medical students from the University of Chicago to the FVH.

BSTTW COMMUNITY NEWS

Also in 2004 BSTTW was contacted by the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Nguyen Phuong Tra Tu, the Ministry’s representative, informed BSTTW about a young Vietnamese girl, Tu Tu, who was badly burned in Daklak,



Viet Nam. While at a kindergarten class, Tu Tu tripped over a pot of boiling water. She was badly burned. Tu Tu’s parents were called and Tu Tu was sent to the

Daklak Hospital emergency room. At the emergency room, Tu Tu’s parents were informed that the Daklak Hospital was unable to offer the treatment needed for the 2nd and 3rd degree burns. Tu Tu was transported over 1000 kilometers north to the National Institute of Burns (NIB) in Ha Noi, Viet Nam. Dr. Le Nam and his team offered the best medical care possible to Tu Tu.

NIB is the top burn unit in Viet Nam. Unfortunately the best burn unit in Viet Nam does not have the needed medical equipment to help an individual suffering from extensive burns. Tu Tu turned out to be one of those individuals.

Dr. Le Nam contacted BSTTW. Michael Appleman and Dr. Le Nam spoke about Tu Tu and supplying NIB with medical equipment, medications and finances. Dr. Le Nam submitted a request to the Vietnamese Government asking to allow BSTTW and the NIB to team up and work together in order to not only help Tu Tu but other burn victims in Viet Nam. After several weeks of review, the Vietnamese Ministry of National Defense informed Dr. Le Nam that NIB and BSTTW has been approved to begin working together and helping the Vietnamese burn victims. This is a very big step for both the NIB and BSTTW. With the approval from the Vietnamese government BSTTW and NIB now have the opportunity to request the grants, medical supplies, funding and volunteers needed to offer the medications, medical equipment and

CONTINUED Page 3 “VIET NAM”

CONTINUED From Page 2 “VIET NAM”

funding needed for NIB to offer extensive medical treatment to the burn victims in Viet Nam, to educate the Vietnamese burn survivor community and work with the fire departments to educate the public on fire safety and helping a burn victim reenter their village.

Itch and the Burn Survivor

By: Lynda Rae Fraser

As a burn survivor of more than twenty years I have been plagued with dry skin itch. Over the years I have tried most of the lotions on the market. I have even tried a few prescription creams. All eventually let me down and the itch returned.

A few years back, at World Burn Congress, there was a workshop on post-burn itch. One professional tried to explain it away as a sign of the burn healing. There were several of us in the room who were several years post burn and we laughed at this notion. Surely our skin had finished healing a long time ago. The other thing that we all had in common was that it was not our scar tissue that was causing us the most problems but our donor sites. A lot of ideas were exchanged that day on how we each handled this problem. Some of the suggestions were: a warm bath, a massage, heating pads, a cool shower, antihistamines, etc. While all of these helped temporarily no one had a suggestion that offered long lasting relief. It was however comforting to know that it is a common problem for burn survivors and not something we were the only one experiencing.

Perhaps because of this particular workshop I started to become more aware of when my itching was at its worst. I had long ago noticed that it was worse in the winter than in the summer. I had also noticed a few years back that it seemed to subside after I had got some sun in the spring. A few years back I started to take Calcium because I am not much of a milk drinker and I was concerned about my bones as I aged. After reading an article in a magazine I started to take the Calcium pills with Vitamin D in them as the body needs the Vitamin D to properly absorb the Calcium. Like most people I

BSTTW COMMUNITY NEWS

am not very good at faithfully taking any kind of medication and at first my intake of the Calcium and Vitamin D pills was hit or miss.

This past fall as the sun was seen less and less I started to feel the familiar winter itch setting in. I also remembered I hadn't taken any Calcium and Vitamin D pills for awhile and so I started to try and be more faithful to this regime. After a few days of taking my pills the itch went away! It got me to thinking about how when I get enough sun I don't itch and now when I take Vitamin D I don't itch. We get Vitamin D naturally from the sun! I am not a medical professional but I do know that for me if I take my Calcium and Vitamin D pills daily I am not nearly as itchy as I am when I don't. It has not completely eliminated the itch but it has made it bearable. I take two Calcium and Vitamin D pills each day. The Vitamin D in each pill is 125 IU.

Pig-Pickin'...What?!? A Mother's First WBC...

By: Cheryl Inmon Long

December marks the fifth-year anniversary of my daughter's burn injury (33% full-thickness.) From the beginning, the experience of being the mother of a burn survivor has been a lonely one. I recall sitting in the waiting room of the burn ICU unit the second week Meredith was in a drug-induced coma. A social worker and the child life specialist would occasionally come by and explain different aspects of the physical care my daughter was receiving and would ask if I understood or had questions. On one particular occasion, I timidly asked, "What about *me*? How can *I* get through this?" Unfortunately, they didn't seem to have an easy answer, but another burn ICU patient's wife and daughter overheard the conversation and quickly said, "We're here – and we will be here." To this day, those words touch my heart.

My daughter is now 18 and will soon be "graduating" from the local burn camp for children. On another long day in the burn ICU waiting room, the social worker and child life

CONTINUED Page 4 “MOTHER”

CONTINUED From Page 3 “MOTHER”

specialist came by and started talking about children. On another long day in the burn ICU waiting room, the social worker and child life specialist came by and started talking about burn camp. I thought to myself, “Well, that’s real nice, but I don’t have a daughter who will be interested in anything like that – and no offense, but once I am out of here, I never want to (have to) see any of these people ever again.” I somehow thought that after my daughter was released from the hospital, that would be it. I hadn’t realized how much I would be seeing these caring people again and again – nor had I realized that I had been initiated into a world, or a “club” or the “family” of burn recovery.

The professionals took very good care of my daughter. They were really always there more for her, as it should be, and primarily for her physical aspects of recovery, with the exception of burn camp – and did my daughter love burn camp! She began to look forward to it each summer! Because she will be “aging out” soon,



I read with interest some information about the upcoming World Burn Congress. This year, according to the brochure, they were

include a pre-conference workshop for young adults (“Young Adulthood 101: Exploring Your Future”) I began to think about sending Meredith to the WBC in hopes that she would have an opportunity to meet other young adult burn survivors and gain support during the transition into adulthood.

As time neared, even though Meredith was interested in attending, she was apprehensive about going to Raleigh alone. Someone suggested that I go with her. At first, I thought – “Me?” A few days later, however, I began to think about attending. I read about some of the

BSTTW COMMUNITY NEWS

workshops and support groups for family members, and was reminded of my own occasional bout with emotional leftovers. I didn’t know what to expect, but felt an intuitive sense that it might be beneficial. And so, we went.

On the morning of the opening ceremony, I walked through the hotel corridors and began to feel a little nervous, the kind of nervous you feel when you are alone in a big place and don’t know anyone or what to expect. (Meredith would be sitting with her new life-long friends she had met the day before at the pre-conference!) It didn’t take long, though, before friendly members of the “club” approached me and struck up conversations. I found these individuals to be warm, genuine, involved, caring, interested, mindful, giving, and...fun!

The next three days were phenomenal. At the Family Workshop, I met a couple whose young daughter’s burn accident was much like Meredith’s. We spoke of surgeries, upcoming surgeries, and I marveled that there was someone out there “just like me.”

One night, the young girl’s mother and I had, what was for me, one of the most intimate conversations I have shared with another person. We had gone through so many of the same very personal experiences. We found that we had even prayed for similar (somewhat irrational) miracles during the first few days following our daughters’ injuries.

After our talk, I went to my hotel, which shared



an adjoining parking lot with the Sheraton, where the WBC was being held. As I walked outside, the Autumn night

air felt very refreshing. I looked up that night and breathed such a sigh of relief. For almost five years, I had felt so alone in my experience

CONTINUED Page 5 “MOTHER”

CONTINUED From Page 4 “MOTHER”

of being the mother of a young burn survivor – and frankly, some of this time had been difficult. In talking with my new friend, however, I had found what I had unknowingly come for - I felt lighter and more complete, as though a lost piece of me had found its way back.

Throughout the WBC, I mingled with such very strong individuals. I smiled when firefighters playing bagpipes led the opening procession. I wept during what is referred to as “open mike”, a time in which individuals can share their stories with others if they choose. I felt inspired after listening to invited speakers, for example, Jami Goldman (who lost both legs from frostbite, later became a marathon runner, and was featured in an Adidas commercial) and Dan Cathy (President of Chick-fil-A and also a burn survivor.)

On Friday night, we were treated to a genuine North Carolina “pig-pickin’ barbeque (“ya’ll”), sponsored by firefighters throughout the state (quite delicious!) Saturday, we attended the banquet, a more formal occasion, complete with a disc jockey and dancing! And I mean dancing!! At the dance, I met a gentleman and we talked about what happens at the WBC. He said it best: “You listen. You share where you’re at. You tell your story. Through telling your story, you not only share something that might be helpful to someone else, but you also begin and continue the process of your own healing.”

A fire chief in one of the breakout sessions, “Caring for the Caregiver,” shared a unique perspective of burn recovery that I had never considered, but certainly understood. He shared with honesty the experiences that firefighters sometimes have during painful moments of reflection. He added, “I consider myself a burn survivor, too.” Those words resonated with me and helped explain some of my own experiences following my daughter’s burn injury – for having been initiated into this “family” of burn survival, I too have valid issues which surface from time to time. Like family, we can know and understand each other in ways

that perhaps we need to know and understand each other.

I am so very thankful that burn recovery is moving in the direction of providing more opportunities for all involved to share and learn from each other. Through such interactions at the WBC, elists, chats, and support groups, we can meander through this emotional healing process – not alone, but with other burn *thrivers*. After all, “*We’re here - and we will be here.*”

Insights and Revelations By: Fire Part II

By: Michele Neil

Part I is in the July 2004 Issue

When I awoke, the intensive care room was dark except for tiny flickering lights and strange sounds pricked my numbed senses as I stirred to consciousness. I was in pain and lying in a dark, frightening place all alone. Gowned and masked strangers tended to my intravenous tubes and replaced empty bags. The nurses overhead talked amongst themselves. For days, weeks, these strangers came and went doing things that caused me much pain. No one talked to me about what I was experiencing or about what had happened to me.

Baths had been initiated three times a day. My nerve endings floated, exposed in the bath water and the motion of the water wracked my body with pain. My screams could be heard outside the hospital. Nurses tried to entice me to eat but the inside of my mouth had ulcers the size of quarters. Tube feedings began and when I had had enough of the nurses inserting the tubes into my nose I took the tubes and inserted them myself.

A photographer came to I.C.U. to take pictures of my body. He directed nurses to set me in front of the white curtains hanging from the ceiling. He coaxed me to look into the camera and to be still. I was naked and like a

CONTINUED Page 6 “INSIGHTS”

CONTINUED From Page 5 "INSIGHTS"

featherless chick. I couldn't stand on my feet and I trembled with weakness. I wanted to go to my crib. Then the photographer tricked me. He said that mommy was in the camera. I perked up, my eyes lit up with hope and I called for mommy. The heat of the flash of the camera stung my raw flesh. My heart sank as I was carried away and my wounds were wrapped. The photographer lied and I believed him. I felt angry and ashamed and I cried inside for my mother. When I was an adult it was nearly impossible for me to look into a live TV camera. Eventually I saw the connection between the TV camera and the photographer in the hospital. That experience hindered opportunities for me to find employment in related fields for which I had a natural talent.

From my crib in I.C.U. through a small window in the door, I watched an unknown doctor gown and mask himself. He peered at me through the window. I was apprehensive. Who he was and what was he going to do to me, I thought. No one accompanied him and no one told me what he was there for. He told me to lie still on my back. He opened my legs. I froze with fear. I thought of other things and tried to ignore what he was doing. I felt his fingers around my genitalia and something inside me but was too afraid to look.

I dealt with the experience like most I was experiencing in the hospital. It was just another uncomfortable procedure, but somehow this one was different. I was angry. Why didn't a nurse come with him? Why I was left alone with this strange man, I asked myself.

Days and weeks passed and no one came to visit. A fever I had since early in the hospital stay never dropped below 103 degrees. Mega doses of iron administered to me had turned my teeth black. I could not leave I.C.U. to visit or play with other children and still no one read to me nor did I have a TV. I was left totally to my own imagination to entertain myself in the same crib that I slept in. The isolation, boredom, physical pain and the deepening emotional grief of abandonment continued relentlessly.

Prior to the accident I had learned that to be out of the sight of my parents was to be forgotten or "out of mind." I used that awareness to avoid my Dad's senseless whippings and mental abuse. Staying out of sight was crucial to my safety. Now my survival tactic was backfiring. I wanted someone to find me but I was helpless. I had been forgotten and I couldn't appear before them to let them know I was still here. No one was going to help me. I came to believe that no one would ever help me and I was not capable of helping myself. (This belief and state of mind pervaded my life for years. It was only in my mid 40s that I was finally free of the fear and anxiety of feeling helpless and without the help of others.)

Doctors talked to my mother by phone. They feared the pain of my injuries could drive me "insane." Treating the pain was not a medical practice at that time. The physicians were concerned that pain relief medication might interfere with the body's attempt to fight infection. I found my own way to escape the unbearable, incessant pain. I was able to mentally separate my mind from my body. My mind floated at the opposite end of the crib, observing the wretched, monkey-like creature, present at the other end.

Even though eventually I learned to walk again, to play as a child I ever reconciled myself with that ugly, terrifying, pain-inflicted creature. I remained separated in some psychological way and in a mental fog that had numbed my senses and emotions. (This condition of mind did not end until my early thirties when I underwent corrective surgery...more on this later.)

As a student, I hid from children who made fun of my massive purple scars. Finding a place of safety was crucial and being invisible was that place for me. Also, staying out of my father's sight was the first step in trying to create a sense of safety.

I couldn't physically hide easily so I began to withdraw inwardly, developing a wall. This wall

CONTINUED Page 7 "INSIGHTS"

CONTINUED From Page 6 "INSIGHTS"

was to absorb the pain of rejection, of ridicule and fear. Wearing clothing that covered me fully became very important. Unfortunately my parents couldn't afford suitable clothing. I wore hand-me downs that were often sleeveless. In gym classes at school we were required to wear gym suits, which exposed the legs and arms. There were just so few places and ways to hide.

The sadness and despair I lived in during my hospital stay never lifted and for the next nine years I remained in the fog of depression. It worsened over time and I became suicidal by the age of seven and this continued until I was nearing the age of 14. I longed to be dead. Neighborhood kids didn't want me around either. They'd chase me away with rakes and throw stones or beat me. I still have the scars on my scalp from the stones they had thrown.

I was afraid all the time, afraid of being harmed again, afraid of boys and men, afraid of being despised, like my father despised me. When afraid I wanted to be invisible and eventually I believed I was invisible. When people spoke to me I was shocked that they could see me and I didn't acknowledge their presence. I was afraid to "come out" and speak to them. I continued to retreat still further within myself building a thick wall that no one could penetrate. This retreat tactic was still evident and in use even as an adult. The wall became my own emotional prison. It wouldn't let anything in and it wouldn't let any real self expression out.

About the age of 12 my mother sent me to an all girl camp during a summer and I regularly attended a girls youth group. Through this group I was introduced to the Oshawa Christian Youth Centre. The Youth Centre attracted young people from all over the city in which I lived. The meetings were warm and inviting. People talked to me and seemed genuinely interested in me. I began to experience positive human interaction and I wanted more of it. I continued attend the Christian Youth Centre and my inward life began to change.

BSTTW COMMUNITY NEWS

Longing to not be afraid and to find the courage to come out of the prison the wall had become, I turned to God. I asked Him to help me let go of my bitterness towards Him for allowing all that had happened to me. I asked Him to help me to love Him. After nine years, in a suicidal depression, there was an inner awakening at the age of 14. I became aware that behind my deep and hard wall there was a person inside, longing to be free to be herself and without fear. What I truly was inside wanted to be that outwardly. I had to overcome all the fears and understand what had happened to me.

From age 14 to 16 I suffered chronic insomnia. Seldom did I sleep for more than two hours a night. I tossed and turned, and repeated the question to myself, How do I go to sleep? I didn't know that sleep was a normal function of the body. I thought there was something I had to do. Maybe I didn't deserve sleep. Maybe I had left something undone and I was being punished.

My parents were aware that I was having difficulty sleeping but no treatment was investigated. I continued to attend the Oshawa Christian Youth Centre. One of the leaders gave me ministry tapes to listen to. One speaker talked about childhood trauma and how that trauma will manifest itself in the teen years. At that very moment I understood that my insomnia was due to the anxieties and stresses I experienced in the hospital while being treated for the burns.

That seemed to be all I needed to know because that night for the first time in two years I fell asleep minutes after going to bed. I was healed of the sleeping disorder immediately. It was after a year of good wholesome sleep night after night that I began to experience a sense of health and well-being.

At age 16 more powerful insights and revelations came through God. Healing began to take place and my confidence in God grew. For the first time in my life I felt joy and **CONTINUED Page 8 "INSIGHTS"**

CONTINUED From Page 7 "INSIGHTS"

love. My love for God bubbled over and I made many good friends.

After high school I moved away to attend a college in another city. Fear still hindered me and attending school was a struggle. I was afraid of the social interaction. I didn't have the support of a Christian Youth Centre and I didn't have any friends in this new place. I was unable to finish my two year course. I was afraid and too shy to pursue work during the summer and my Dad's income was too high to qualify me for a student loan for the second year. In the meantime I had made some new friends and met the man that would become my husband.

I found employment at the local hospital through a friend. A year later I married. The way ahead grew difficult again. When I learned that my husband and I were going to have a baby I fell into a suicidal depression. I was baffled by my emotional state of mind and suffered much by it. Why did "having a baby", which should have been so wonderful, make me want to die? As the months passed caring for our baby son, I began to cope better but I remained in the depression for the next few years.

In three years we had another son and it was a very joyous occasion and I enjoyed the whole process. However, life became mundane and unfulfilling. I over worked and succumbed to pneumonia two to three times a year for seven years during which we had our third and last son. I felt bonded to this child as I carried him and after he was born. I enjoyed caring for him and loved him but depression plagued my life. I worked hard to escape and to fulfill some standard of performance I was driven to fulfill. Most days of the week were unproductive. I slept afternoons away when the children were at school.

Or, I worked to exhaustion. I asked God for understanding and freedom from whatever was robbing me of joy and peace.

I read Christian and pop psychology books searching for answers to my

BSTTW COMMUNITY NEWS

emotional pain and deep sadness. Over the years I had forgotten about the monster, about the ravaging flames and the pain the flames inflicted and about the body I once had.

And, I had forgotten that I had separated myself from my body emotionally and mentally. When the physical pain eventually ended, around the age of six, I continued to remain disconnected. Throughout my life I had felt like an "it", neither male nor female, nor human for that matter.

In my early 30s my medical doctor suggested that I see a plastic surgeon. Neither of my arms would fully extend because of restricting scar tissue. In preparation for surgery I drew sketches indicating where I wanted the surgeon to work. For the first time in my life I was able to look objectively at my body. During the two years in which I had several surgical procedures a remarkable and phenomenal change occurred in the perception of myself.

My body was scarred, yes, but I could see that it was a female body. Since the initial burns I saw myself as ugly, a hideous beast much like the elephant man. But there it was, a recognizable female body. I was exhilarated by learning that I was human and that I was a female, but I felt sadness for the loss of my unscarred and youthful, child's body. And, I grieved that loss which should have been worked through at the time of the loss. I was able to accept the reality that my body was now 32 years old. To know that I was a female, something other than an "it" was exhilarating. The whole process of grieving the loss of my body image and accepting the altered body image brought about a miraculous and powerful change.

It was as if by ethereal threads, my mind and body was sewn back together. A roller coaster ride of intense emotions accompanied the process. I felt my body come alive and although the emotional pain was extreme I could finally feel and the feelings were overwhelming. I became less afraid to speak

CONTINUED Page 9 "INSIGHTS"

CONTINUED From Page 8 "INSIGHTS"

my mind. I began to wear colourful, feminine, flattering clothes but I was still shy about revealing my scars. Since the accident, I had tremendous fear about others seeing my scars. The scars, I thought were the reason why I was despised by my father and why rejection would come from my peers. Now I wanted to be around people and get out into the public more often. I was energized and excited about what was ahead for me in my life. I felt all new and that life would be different now.

I felt like a teenager with hormones out of control. I reminded myself that I was a married woman with children but I did not feel loved by my husband. He was someone I tolerated and was forced to please. I had been robbed of the years of my youth and now I was bound in an unhappy marriage. I had issues with my father to resolve but I was trying to resolve them through other men, including my husband. I looked to God to help me understand what the hurricane of emotions was all about. I wanted real love in my marriage and real communication and trust. I wanted my husband to participate in the good changes that were happening in me. And, I wanted changes for us both.

My husband didn't want the changes. I was coming alive and becoming my own person and that threatened him. I wanted to be free of fears, anxiety and depression. I wanted to be truly happy. I couldn't share with him or get his support during months of deep emotional upheaval. He was as distant as always and ultimately our marriage ended in divorce.

The separation from my husband and home, and for a while, from my children, triggered debilitating pain of profound isolation and the old feeling of disconnectedness from significant others. I had learned to associate being alone with being in pain, whether physical or emotional, with no comfort and without help from others. And, at a deeper level I believed that I couldn't help myself. In a surreal world of lifelessness and anxiety, deep sadness and depression clouded my mind and emotions. I lost initiative to do things.

I didn't want to read, write, do artwork, play the piano, study, or work. There was no inner spirit or energy to do the things I wanted to do. In my marriage I had been a workaholic and generally depressed. On my own my days were unproductive empty and frightening. Going for a drive or walk did not diminish the emptiness. I'd run to my friends to escape the fog.

Most of the time friends were not available for a visit, confirming my feeling of abandonment and that I was truly alone in the world. I would drive through town hoping to "be found" but unless I met with a good friend the sadness and despair in that surreal state would not lift. Having my children around did not alleviate this grievous state of mind. Although I struggled to get control of my life I could not overcome the mental and emotional fog of deep despair and hopelessness. Sleeping through the hours of the day was an escape. There were so many things I wanted to do and accomplish in my life but I gave up trying because the surreal state always came over me and rendered me incapable of doing anything.

As I continued to seek God for help and understanding, changes came slowly. In my early forties I went back to College and picked up a diploma. Within six months I was working at a job for which I had trained. I continued to struggle with debilitating fears and anxieties about finances and being unable to look after myself and sons. I asked God to increase my trust in Him.

One July morning in 2003 I was facing another day under the influence of that terrible feeling of deep aloneness. I was angry about it and I told God I didn't want to face one more day under the influence of the horrible sense of abandonment and hopelessness. At that moment I understood that I had been angry for years about being abandoned in the hospital. I had been angry at God and that had closed me off to better communication with Him. I asked God's forgiveness. Instantly a familiar sensation and power moved through

CONTINUED Page 10 "INSIGHTS"

CONTINUED From Page 9 "INSIGHTS"

my whole body. I knew I was being freed. The fog was gone, the pain was gone and the sense of isolation was gone and I knew at that moment it was gone forever. In situations that would guarantee feelings of loss and aloneness there was now a tremendous enjoyment in spending time alone. Instead of looking for company and companionship, I was finally happy with being by myself. My energy increased and I had hope and plans for the future.

Later that same summer I planned a move to Calgary, Alberta. Two of my sons were already residents of Calgary and my youngest and I wanted to join them. If it hadn't been for the healing miracle earlier that summer, I could not have moved onward in my life. And, because I had learned to put trust in God I was able to follow His lead to a new life. There are other remains of the burn trauma and from growing up in an abusive and dysfunctional family that make life a struggle, but not as in the past. My hope is in the Lord and in Him do I trust and that is the safest and happiest place in which to live.

Since I moved to Calgary, my life is so very different. I am truly happy and I experience the feelings of hope and joy every day. I treasure the insights that I have gained through the painful life I had lived. I have learned what this life is really about. Not only do I understand why things were they way they were but that because of my experiences I have gained infinitely more than I would have had my life been any different.

My father wanted to help my grandmother but he became angry when she refused to let him use the fuel he had brought back from the garage. Dad's feelings of inferiority were easily tormented. He'd become almost insanely irrational.

I believe that Dad threw the can at me deliberately. If he was angry or hurting, emotionally and physically he would lash out with physical violence at others. Dad had

BSTTW COMMUNITY NEWS

created the dilemma against someone else's better judgment.

Now that he was suffering as a consequence he had to "get even." It was just too humiliating. I happened to be the closet target. This was often the case and this is why I tried to stay hidden from my father. I never knew when he'd strike me or for what I might be whipped. I think that being the eldest child, and more threatening than my younger sister, he'd use me to vent his rage.

I was terrified of my father. We never spoke one sentence to each other until I was in my early 20ies. I thought I would never be free of my fear of him. In my early 30ies, however, there was a dramatic change. (Same time as the many other changes were happening.) The fear left and I was able to sit in my father's presence and carry on a conversation without any fear. I visited him from time to time and actually enjoyed the short visits.

Before I moved to Alberta, Canada in October 2003, I took Dad out of the nursing facility he is living in and we went for a long drive and lunch. When I left him that day we hugged and he gave me a kiss on my cheek. It was the second hug I ever remember receiving from my Dad and the first hug I ever gave him. He said he loved me and I said the same.

I was almost certain it would be the last time I'd see him alive. I feel very sad about that as I would have liked to learn more about my dad and about how he felt during his times of difficulty in his life. Dad is dying a slow and painful death and he doesn't know who I am when I call. Even if I could visit him he is not well enough to talk about the past.

Hope this helps and more questions are welcome.

~Michele

A Strong Feeling of Inspiration and the Will to "Get on With It!"

By Delores Gempel Lekowski

A strong feeling of inspiration and the will to "get on with it" emanated from the survivors attending the World Burn Congress (WBC). An awesome collection of incredible stories from survivors showed how anything can be accomplished when there is the will to do so. As I listened to survivors' stories, I thought about how each one successfully endured with dignity, determination and strength the maze of pain and suffering that was forced upon them.

Most attendees that I spoke with said "as bad as it was, getting burned turned out to be the best thing that ever happened to me. The experience has changed my life in a very positive way." Not once did anyone say, "I wish this had never happened to me!" Each story was so compelling that I could almost picture it being produced as a movie, full of hardship and perseverance. I could imagine patrons leaving the theater with a renewed feeling of hope and a respect for the challenges that burn survivors face.

Those attendees who were far into their recovery took those who had been recently injured under their wings, offering support and encouragement. Many tears were shed and close bonds were formed.

I noticed the people sitting near us who had not been burned, and I also noticed those who were serving lunch during the Congress. I wondered what they were thinking and how much they learned from our experiences. Did they leave with a better understanding of who we are and what we have accomplished? Do they feel our energy for life? It is impossible to attend the World Burn Congress and not be affected in some inspirational way. As the group encouraged each other with their stories, I wondered how many others overheard and were also helped in their daily lives! Being in a room with survivors who are filled with so much positive energy can sustain a person for a lifetime. Every year I leave the WBC with a

BSTTW COMMUNITY NEWS

sense of well being, totally inspired and very proud to be a burn survivor.

If you want to learn more, please visit the World Burn Congress website at <http://www.burnsurvivorsttw.org/donations/wbc.html>. And if you've never participated in it before, I hope you'll think about joining us next year!

What is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder?

By: Dr. Debra Moore, PhD.

You've probably heard the term 'shell shocked' used to refer to veterans traumatized by war experiences. After the Vietnam War, the term 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder' began to be used. Most folks probably continue to associate the term with the extreme horrors of war. Actually, it applies to a much wider scope of traumas, and there is seldom a day that our office doesn't see someone struggling with post traumatic stress.

In news reports about horrible tragedy, the severe, long-term effects of that event on the survivors are seldom discussed. The announcer may note that counselors were made available, such as to the workers at the Oklahoma City bomb site, or to schoolchildren after a sniper entered their steelyard. I've read several accounts of children reunited with parents after being abducted (and often physically or sexually injured), in which it's casually stated that the child appears to be doing fine. I cringe when I read these accounts and hope the parents realize their child most likely needs professional assistance to work through and recover from their trauma.

Post traumatic stress disorder basically refers to the development of certain symptoms following exposure to an extreme trauma involving actual or threatened death, serious physical injury, or other threat to one's personal integrity. Exposure can be as the victim or as an observer or as the recipient of news about the trauma to one's family or close associates.

The person's response involves extreme fear,
CONTINUED Page 12 "PTSD"

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helplessness or horror. In children it may appear as agitated or disorganized behavior. Persistent reexperiencing of the trauma is common even though the person usually tries hard to avoid all reminders of the trauma, sometimes thereby severely restricting their world.

Sleep disturbance is common and nightmares can be persistent and terrifying. The person may startle very easily, jumping if someone comes up behind them or a loud noise is made. They may be prone to irritability or outbursts of anger. Concentration may be impaired. They may have difficulty trusting the world and be hypervigilant, constantly on guard against possible danger or threat.

Sometimes an important aspect of the trauma is blocked out and cannot be remember. The survivor both wants and doesn't want to remember. Depression may set in, with a markedly diminished interest in usual activities and a sense of detachment from others. Usual loving feelings may be deadened.

The person may no longer be able to look into the future, having a sense that they will never experience a normal life span.

Examples of traumatic experiences leading to these symptoms include violent personal attacks such as robbery, assault, rape, mugging and being kidnapped. They also include natural or manmade disasters such as severe automobile accidents, earthquakes, floods, and fires. Being diagnosed with a life-threatening illness or having your spouse or child diagnosed may also cause these symptoms.

In children, trauma may involve exposure to age inappropriate sexual experiences, with or without physical injury. Witnessed events include but are not limited to observing serious injury or unnatural death of another person.

Symptoms usually begin within three months after the trauma, but there may be a delay of months or even years before they appear. Duration of symptoms vary, with complete

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recovery within three months in about half of cases, but with many others persisting for over a year.

Talking about a trauma will not make it worse, as some people fear. Certainly while discussing it, the survivor may experience intense emotions, including anger, sadness, guilt, powerlessness and fear. But it is by talking through these feelings that the healing process begins. Knowing that their reactions are normal and expected under the circumstances is important.

Finally, if you have a friend or family member who has survived trauma and it is too painful for you to listen, you need not feel guilty. It is most likely a reflection of your caring that it is so painful, and sometimes the way you can be most helpful is to steer the person to a professional who can help.

Hidden Beauty

By: Lisa Collins

**Deny
the soul
in faceless
reflection**

**Endless promise
to learn
untaught lesson**

**Reclaim
the power
to love and honor**

**Unearth layers
to the truth
the hidden core
is the actual
proof.**

Lisa Collins

BSTTW CONTACT INFORMATION

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

BSTTW has a support team that is on call 24 hours a day 7 days a week to help a burn survivor, family member or firefighter deal with a burn injury and fire related emergency. You can contact **BSTTW** on the internet or by telephone. On the internet go to the **BSTTW Emergency Email E-Form** at www.burnsurvivorsttw.org/eforms/emergemail.html or the **BSTTW Support Team E-Form** at www.burnsurvivorsttw.org/eforms/supportemail.html

To contact **BSTTW** by telephone by dialing 941-364-8457 or toll free at 800-503-8058. If we are not in the office or it is after hours, you can leave us an emergency message in our voice box 44 and a support team member will respond to you within 24 hours.

BSTTW Directors

Michael Appleman: **Executive Director**
michael@burnsurvivorsttw.org

Nguyễn Thi Diêu Trân: **Director- Việt Nam**
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Laura Bowers: **Editor BSTTW Newsletters**
laura@burnsurvivorsttw.org

DONATIONS

As a 501 (c)(3) Non Profit Organization, **BSTTW** depends on donations from corporations, organizations, families and individuals. All donations, big or small are tax deductible to the extent allowed by the United States government tax laws. **BSTTW** has several different funds that you can donate to. The **BSTTW** general fund, the **Bishop Peter Nguyen Van Nho World Wide Burned Children's Fund**, the **"Dwight Lunkley Racing To Victory" fund**, **USA & Asian Burn**

BSTTW COMMUNITY NEWS

Camp funds, BSTTW Healing Weekend Fund and the World Burn Congress Fund.

Your donations will help **BSTTW** to do what is needed to help a burn survivor, family members rebuild their lives. It will also be used for public awareness on fire safety and how the community can help a burn survivor reenter their community.

BSTTW also offers people that donate \$25.00 or higher to a free copy of the **BSTTW Music CD**. To learn more about this you should go to www.burnsurvivorsttw.org/donations/donatecd.html or www.burnsurvivorsttw.org/donations/donations.html

Remember your donations can be money, clothes, a used bicycle etc.. All will help burn survivors and their family. Many families loose their homes and property. Please personally think about and talk to your family and friends about donating to **BSTTW**.

MAKE DONATIONS PAYABLE TO & MAIL TO:

Burn Survivors Throughout The World, Inc.
650 N Beneva Road #305
Sarasota, Florida 34232

DONATE ON LINE

To learn more about donating on line go to:
www.burnsurvivorsttw.org/donations/donations.html

If you have any questions call us at 941-364-8457, toll free at 800-503-8058 or by email at:
donations@burnsurvivorsttw.org

VOLUNTEERING YOUR TIME

There are many children, adults and families around the world that need support and other help. You do not have to be a burn survivor or family member to become a **BSTTW Volunteer**. All you need to do is become a **BSTTW** member and then apply to become a **BSTTW Volunteer**. If you are a burn survivor or family member, in order to become a **BSTTW Member**, fill out the **BSTTW Membership & Profile Registration E-Form** at:
www.burnsurvivorsttw.org/membership/memform.html,

Next fill out the **BSTTW Volunteer E-Form** at:
www.burnsurvivorsttw.org/volunteer/volunteer.html

If you are not a burn survivor or family member you can skip the **BSTTW Membership & Profile Registration E-Form** and go directly to the **BSTTW Volunteer E-Form**.

By volunteering with **BSTTW**, you will be taking part in rebuilding lives and helping burn survivors reenter their community.

If you have any questions, you should first review the **BSTTW Volunteer E-Form**, after that if your questions have not been answered, you can contact **BSTTW** by email at volunteers@burnsurvivorsttw.org, and by telephone at 941-364-8457 or toll free at 800-503-8058.

PURCHASES

BSTTW has an online store where you can purchase Skin Care Products, Books and Video Tapes. To learn more go to:
www.burnsurvivorsttw.org/sales/sales.html

BSTTW also offers a free copy of the **BSTTW Music CD** to people who donate \$25.00 or higher to **BSTTW**. To learn more about this you should go to

www.burnsurvivorsttw.org/donations/donatecd.html

or

www.burnsurvivorsttw.org/donations/donations.html

BSTTW ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBERS:

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Toll Free: 800-503-8058
Fax: (941) 364-8441

Feel free to contact **BSTTW** if you have any questions and/or comments by using the **BSTTW Comment & Question E-Form** at:
www.burnsurvivorsttw.org/eforms/emailform.html