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BEREAVEMENT CAMP: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF A THERAPEUTIC
PROGRAM FOR GRIEVING YOUTH

by

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for the degree of

Doctorate of Education

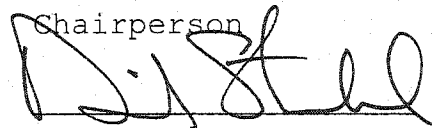
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Dean, Graduate School

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Bereavement Camp: A Qualitative Analysis of a Therapeutic Program for Grieving Youth

Advisor: Rita Sommers-Flanagan, Ph.D. 

This dissertation explores participant perceptions of a bereavement camp experience. Mental health and education literature has drawn attention to the possible benefits of nature-based and wilderness components in healing and development. The purpose of this research was to investigate a therapeutic camp experience for youth who have experienced the death of a family member, addressing two major questions: (1) How can bereavement camp experiences be structured to support a child's bereavement process; and, (2) What aspects of the camp did participants perceive to be most helpful?

Current and salient historic literature in the area of bereavement, with a special emphasis on group and outdoor/adventure treatment, is reviewed. Qualitative data collection procedures included semi-structured interviews with camp participants and their parents or guardians, and the investigation of archival data summarizing participant feedback following bereavement camp participation.

The constant comparative method (Straus and Corbin, 1990) provided a framework for data analysis. The use of multiple methods of data collection and prolonged researcher engagement increased the validity or rigor in this qualitative project.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter Two: Review of the Literature	7
Grief and Mourning	7
General Grief Influences	10
Childhood Grief Influences	12
Supporting Bereaved Children	29
Grief Counseling	31
Outdoor-based Counseling Interventions	36
Counseling Camps	43
Chapter Three: Methodology	49
Data Collection	53
Sample	58
Data Analysis	61
Additional Ethical Considerations	65
Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Results	70
Theme 1: Value of Connections with Peers and Staff	74
Theme 2: Opportunities for Remembering/Commemorating	84
Theme 3: Enjoyable Experiences	93
Theme 4: Natural Setting/Nature-Based Activities	97
Theme 5: Freedom to Be	101
Archival Data: Exit Interviews	103
Chapter Five: Discussion	106
Value of Connections with Peers and Staff	107
Opportunities for Remembering/Commemorating	115
Enjoyable Experiences	122
Natural Setting/Nature-Based Activities	128
Freedom to Be	136
Chapter Six: Conclusions	144
References:	150
Appendices:	
Informed Consent	160
Interview Protocols	163
A Camp to Remember Exit Interview Summaries	165
Interview Transcriptions: Campers	167
Interview Transcriptions: Parents/Guardians	265

**Bereavement Camp: A Qualitative Analysis of a Therapeutic
Program for Grieving Youth**

Prologue

Growing up in Montana blessed me with opportunities to explore creek beds, climb trees and mountains, draw in the dirt with a stick and, ultimately, to find solace in the great outdoors. What is it that brings about this feeling of well-being, of centeredness, of lightness, of connection to a larger whole? Is it the expansiveness of wide-open meadows filled with wildflowers, or the grandeur of a spectacular view from atop a ridge-line? Could it be the feeling of security huddled beneath a juniper "fort" or drawing in the dirt with a stick within the pines - senses filled with varied textures, rich smells, the sounds of crickets, of a breeze, of a distant meadowlark? As an adult, I cannot explain it. As a child, I didn't even try.

During the past 15 years, I have had the privilege of working intensively with children, adolescents and families. For many of these people, themes of loss in general, or of a particular profound loss, was woven through their life stories. Indeed, loss can take many forms: loss of a home, a relationship, a dream, an ability, an opportunity, a sense of predictability, safety, or

perhaps in the most blatantly irreversible way, the loss of life of a family member, friend or loved one.

The youth I've encountered and journeyed with over the years have experienced a variety of losses. In the late 1980's, I had the opportunity to work with youth living on the streets of Portland, Oregon. Interviews revealed losses of care providers, homes, financial security, basic needs including food and shelter, innocence, youthfulness or playfulness, and self-identities. Years in the early nineties were spent working with youth in out-of-home placements in a variety of settings: sex offender treatment, acute hospitalization, and group-home care. In general, these youth were adapting to significant breaks in attachment resulting from separation from primary care providers due to death, abandonment, severe mental health needs, sustained neglect, incarceration, or temporary out-of-home placements. These experiences, coupled with my own comfort and enjoyment in the outdoors, prompted me to explore outdoor or nature-based counseling interventions. This led to my decision to develop and implement a "camp" for children considered to be severely emotionally disturbed in 1994. Later summers provided opportunities to create and supervise outdoor-based counseling programs for group-home residents. Over the past two summers, I have

also had the privilege of supervising and providing therapy for adolescents in a wilderness program for low income and/or adjudicated youth based out of Missoula, Montana.

Recently, I have been focusing on grief and bereavement work with children and their parents following the death of a family member. In 1995, I began co-facilitating experiential bereavement groups for youth between the ages of 5 and 17 participating in the SEASONS program. SEASONS is a Missoula-based program for grieving families. Youth groups support children following the death of a mother, father, sister, or brother. A simultaneous psycho-educational group provides support for parents in addition to education about childhood grief. Since 1997, I have worked with a team of professionals to form and implement an annual bereavement camp for children. This camp focuses on facilitating the bereavement process for children who have experienced the death of a parent, sibling, or primary care provider. Describing the experience, one camp counselor proclaimed, "The natural setting, the unpredictability of rainbows, and the moose, we could all appreciate the unfolding of nature."

Currently, I have the pleasure of directing the SEASONS Bereavement Programs, with Families First Montana. Families First Montana is a non-profit organization committed to

educating and supporting parents and families through life developments and transitions. The SEASONS Bereavement Programs provide after-school groups, A Camp to Remember, family retreats, parent and professional education and consultation, and wilderness trips for adolescents. My interest, involvement, and passion in this area raised questions for me regarding how, most effectively, to facilitate outdoor based counseling interventions to support bereavement processes.

Chapter One

Introduction

Mental health and education literature has drawn attention to the possible benefits of nature-based and wilderness components in healing and development. A survey of therapeutic wilderness programs reveals considerable variability in the services offered by outdoor programs (Davis-Berman, Berman, & Capone, 1994). Different outdoor programs aim to provide an effective alternative for incarcerated youth (Marx, 1988); facilitate transformation of body image (Arnold, 1994); empower incest and rape survivors (Asher, Huffaker, & McNally, 1994); or promote team-building, trust, self-esteem, and confidence (Levine, 1994). These programs often deal with issues related to loss: the loss of the privilege to live at home, the loss of self-esteem, or the loss of a loved one.

Indeed, loss can take many forms. Belwood (1975) described four categories of losses: 1) material loss of a valued object; 2) physical loss encompassing the loss of a body part or organ, or the loss occurring as an individual transitions through developmental stages of life; 3) psychological loss referring to a decrease in one's perception of self-worth, esteem, confidence, or respect; and 4) the loss of a significant relationship through death

or separation. Without minimizing the potential complexity and turmoil of all the different types of losses referred to above, the discussion of loss in this paper will be limited to the irrevocable loss of a family member by death, or childhood bereavement.

Undoubtedly, the loss of a significant relationship can encompass a variety of losses in some of the other categories (e.g. self-identity; financial stability; sense of purpose; anticipated shared experiences).

More children are grieving the death of a family member than one would expect. "One out of every 20 American children under age 15 loses one or both parents due to death" (Steen, as cited in Busch & Kimble, 2001). These deaths defy a cultural assumption that parents will survive at least until their children reach young adulthood.

Whether a death occurs suddenly, tragically, or prematurely, or after a long-term illness, the impact on a child can be wrenching with numerous and life-changing effects (Busch & Kimble, 2001; Trozzi, 1999). This is generally the case with children mourning the death of a family member. In the words of one nine-year-old girl, Alletta Laird:

When Mom told me that Daddy was dead, my
knees started shaking. I almost fell down. My

sister Peg screamed when she found out. My hands still shake when I think about my father...

At our school they told my class that my father had died, and it sort of made me mad because nobody ever played with me. I guess they were embarrassed. It's hard because they think you're different. I've never known anyone else whose father died, but if I did, I would try to cheer her up. I'd invite her over a lot. It would help if your friends could just play with you and treat you like you're a normal person....

I still have dreams about my father—happy dreams. They make me feel good. And sometimes I see the light outside my window—it's on our garage—shining into my window, and I think it's my Dad—his spirit.... Nobody knows about it because the light only shines into my window. It makes me happy (from Krementz, 1981, p. 33-35).

These words offer a glimpse into the young child's journey with death and grief; a glimpse into her unique way of transitioning the relationship she shared with her "Daddy" from one in the physical world, to a very different and very personal form.

Numerous researchers and thanatologists have put great effort into the search for understanding the experience of human bereavement (Kubler-Ross, 1969; Parkes, 2001; Worden, 1982; Wolfelt, 1996). Relying on varied theoretical orientations, and utilizing a range of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, many great thinkers have explored and attempted to help articulate the processes by which bereaved individuals integrate the death of a significant person into their lives.

This dissertation research explored children's perceptions of a bereavement camp experience following the death of a family member. My inquiry addressed two major questions: (1) How can bereavement camp experiences be structured to support a child's bereavement process; and (2) What aspects of the camp did participants experience as most helpful?

Following a review of the current related literature in bereavement, experiential therapies and counseling, and the use of group counseling in bereavement, I will report the results of my investigation of camper experiences of A Camp to Remember (formerly known as Camp O'Ki'Suya). Qualitative data collection procedures included two waves of semi-structured interviews with camp participants in

1998 and 2000; separate interviews with their parents or guardians; and the investigation of exit interviews as archival data. The exit interviews, conducted by camp staff and compiled by Families First Montana, summarize participant feedback following participation in A Camp to Remember.

A qualitative mode of inquiry was deemed to be most appropriate in light of the lack of research currently available regarding bereavement camps. The opportunity to learn from participants is timely. Irvin Yalom (2002), renowned psychotherapist, remarked in a recent publication, The Gift of Therapy, "Take advantage of opportunities to learn from patients. Make a point of inquiring often into the patient's view of what is helpful about the therapy process" (p. 37). Valerie Janesick (2000), dance choreographer and ethnographic researcher, draws a compelling parallel between qualitative research and dance improvisation. In her words:

A good choreographer refuses to be limited to just one approach or one technique from dance history.

Likewise, the qualitative researcher refuses to be limited...the qualitative researcher uses various techniques and rigorous and tested procedures in

working to capture the nuance and complexity of the social situation under study" (p. 381).

In an effort to capture, embrace, and honor the nuance and complexity of the bereavement camp experience for children, I will take to the dance floor with the child interviews, parent interviews, and archival texts. The constant comparative method (Straus and Corbin, 1990) provides a framework for data analysis. The use of multiple methods of data collection and prolonged researcher engagement with the case increases validity or rigor in this qualitative project. Validity in qualitative research addresses the descriptions and explanations arising from the project and whether or not the explanation fits the description. More specifically, is the explanation credible (Janesick, 2000)?

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Grief gardeners... believe that grief is organic. That grief is as natural as the setting of the sun and as elemental as gravity. To us, grief is a complex but perfectly natural-and necessary- mixture of human emotions. Grief gardeners do not cure the grieving child; instead we create conditions that allow the bereaved child to mourn. Our work is more art than science, more heart than head. The bereaved child is not our patient but instead our companion. (Wolfelt 1996, p. 2).

It is certainly a truism to state that loss, death, change and transition are absolutely central to the human experience. However, describing these experiences is challenging. This chapter provides an overview of the current literature in the fields of counseling, psychology, experiential education, wilderness therapy, and death studies.

Grief and Mourning

Commonly in the literature, the term "grief" refers to an individual's personal experience, thoughts, and feelings associated with a loss (Wolfelt, 1996; Worden, 1996). The internal experience (i.e., thoughts and feelings) or the

internal meaning given to the experience of losing a loved one is known as grief (Wolfelt, 1996). Following the death of a family member or loved one (bereavement), an individual may experience a sense of being lost and not knowing what to do (Iserson, 1999). Iserson, a medical doctor and author focusing on supporting individuals following sudden death, offers an example of grief: "the sense of being suspended from life, inability to concentrate, indifference to immediate needs, disbelief that the decedent is really gone, and their feeling that life can never be worth living again. This is grief" (p. 89). In addition to emotional responses, grief counselors and authors FitzGerald (2000) and Worden (1982) identify physical sensations commonly reported by bereaved individuals:

1. Experience of hollowness in stomach or abdomen or tightness in the chest, shoulders, and throat
2. Oversensitivity to noise
3. Sense of depersonalization in which nothing (including one's self) feels real
4. Breathlessness (often deep sighing)
5. Muscular weakness
6. Lack of energy and fatigue
7. Dry mouth and/or tightness of throat

8. Headaches, back & neck pain, and/or dizziness

9. Weight loss or gain

10. Sleep disturbance

Mourning is the externalized manifestation of grief or expressing grief through behavior (Iserson, 1999; Wolfelt, 1996; Worden, 1996). Clinical thanatologist, Alan Wolfelt (1996), describes mourning as "grief gone public" (p. 15). Wearing black clothing or other cultural behaviors communicating that a person is grieving are acts of mourning. Mourning rituals, including funerals, memorial services and commemorative activities, can facilitate grief (Seale, 1998). Worden (1996) described mourning as "a broad spectrum of responses set into motion with the death of a loved one" (p. 10).

Mental health professionals have been concerned about grief and loss from at least Freud forward. Parkes (2001) credits Freud both with coining the term "grief work" and with recognizing that grief warrants—even demands—psychological work that we neglect at our own peril.

Research the turn of the century has documented the various and diverse aspects of adult grieving processes, including noting the wide variance in mourning rituals across cultures. Early analytically-oriented mental health professionals believed that a fully developed, adult ego

was necessary for the individual to experience loss and subsequent grief, which may account for the lack of attention to the grief experiences of children in this literature until quite recently (Parkes, 2001).

General Grief Influences

The experience of grief, and the difficulties faced by those grieving, vary from individual to individual, from culture to culture, and perhaps even across time, as cultures evolve and change, influenced by times of peace and harmony, war, famine or disease, and so on. Because of the profound influences of culture, this dissertation is limited to a focus on members raised in the dominant Euro-American culture, sharing experiences of loss between the years 1988 and 2002. Even with culture held relatively constant, there are many individual factors that come into play in determining the parameters of the grief experience.

In a study carried out at the Scott and White Clinic in Temple, Texas, high-risk factors for 74 mourners were identified and investigated (Gamino, Sewell, & Easterling, 1998). Respondent age ranged from 20 to 80 years, and the vast majority of respondents were White and female. Responses on the Grief Experience Inventory and in semi-structured interviews illuminated three factors that the researchers found to be correlated with intensified

mourning. These factors were: 1) the age of the decedent (younger); 2) the quality of the relationship prior to the death (conflictual, ambivalent, or overly dependent); and 3) mourner liability (explained as mental health challenges which undermined the mourner's capacity to respond adaptively or limited the individual's emotional resiliency).

Obviously, one could assume that mourner liabilities might include basic cognitive development, life experiences, and particular vulnerabilities and dependencies. As noted above, a certain level of cognitive development and awareness is necessary to begin to comprehend the finality of death (Balk, 1996; Oltjenbruns, 2001; Worden, 1982). While it is probably true of all mourners, regardless of age, the following has been shown to be particularly salient for children: Children revisit a death experience as they move to new stages of social, emotional and cognitive awareness (Doka, 1995; Oltjenbruns, 2001). Bereavement researchers illuminate a variety of implications for counselors working with bereaved individuals. Individual bereavement of surviving family members is influenced by a variety of factors: a) The relationship to the deceased, b) whether or not the death was anticipated or sudden, c) violent or non-violent, d)

and whether or not the deceased suffered in dying or was disfigured (Goldman, 2001; Wolfelt, 1996; Doka, 1995; Worden, 1996). Beyond these, a child's previous experiences with losses coupled with his or her developmental stage, the secondary or simultaneous loss encountered (e.g. financial stability, changes in housing or schools), and the reactions of significant others further shape a child's bereavement process.

Childhood Grief Influences

Although historically, as mentioned above, claims were made that children could not actually grieve due to lack of the necessary ego development, the vast majority of professionals in this area now agree that children do, in fact, register the experience of loss and react with mourning.

Child Bereavement Study

A longitudinal, comprehensive assessment of childhood grief provided a wealth of information to the literature available on childhood grief. J. William Worden (1996) and Dr. Phyllis Silverman designed the Child Bereavement Study in an effort to address limitations of previous studies to clarify the behavioral response in school-age children following the death of a parent. The principal investigators followed a non-clinical sample of bereaved

families in the greater Boston area for 2 years after the death of a parent, seeking to identify specific behaviors that were considered to be overrepresented in bereaved children when compared to a matched sample of non-bereaved children. Worden and Silverman interviewed 70 families with 125 children between the ages of 6 and 17. Taped interviews included questions relating to the parent's death, the child's mourning behavior, and the child's thoughts about the deceased (Silverman, Nickman, & Worden, 1996). Fifty of the families had experienced the death of a father and twenty, the death of a mother. Worden (1996) cites national death statistics that for the age cohort (average age = 41 years) of these parents, 2.5 men die for each 1 woman who dies. The boys (n=65) and girls (n=60) in the sample were attending first through twelfth grades. The average age of the boys and girls was 11.6 years. Seventy four percent of the participating children had lost their fathers and 26% had lost their mothers. For the majority of families, the cause of death was identified as "Natural Causes" (n=62), followed by "Accidental Death" (n=5), "Suicide" (n=2), and "Homicide" (n=1).

Semi-structured interviews with the children and their surviving parent were conducted in the family home

4 months after the death and at the time of the first and second year anniversaries. Parents also completed a battery of scales and checklists: Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales; Family Crisis Oriented Personal Evaluation Scales; Family Inventory of Life Events; Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale (CES-D); Impact of Events Scale (IES) and, for each child, a Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL).

The authors' findings encouraged a shift in the contemporary understanding of the bereavement process. In their words:

Bereavement should not be viewed as a psychological state that ends or from which one recovers. The intensity of feelings may lessen and the child may become oriented more to the future than to the past, but a concept of closure that requires a determination of when the bereavement process ends does not seem compatible with the view suggested by these findings. The emphasis should be on negotiating and renegotiating the meaning of the loss over time, rather than on letting go. While the loss is permanent and unchanging, the process is not. Thus bereavement should be understood as a cognitive, as well as an

emotional, process that takes place in a social context of which the deceased is a part.

(Silverman, Nickman, & Worden, 1996, p. 144-145)

The researcher's findings underlined the complexities inherent in the grief process and the individual and developmental influences which interact with that process.

Unique Characteristics of Childhood Grief

Mental health professionals and grief researchers generally agree that a child's experience with grief differs from that of a bereaved adult in many important ways (Rosen, 1991; Cooper, 1999; Webb, 1993; Wolfelt, 1996). Children have fewer well-developed coping skills, frequently relying on regression, repression, denial, and displacement in response to stressful situations (Oltjenbruns, 2001). Although not necessarily negative, these coping styles can be problematic at later developmental phases. Their limited repertoire of coping mechanisms leads children to be more dependent on adult support and more influenced by adult role models (Worden, 1996). Children often imitate or mirror the modes of coping or communication displayed by adults close to them (Oltjenbruns, 2001). A child is able to tolerate intense emotional states for only a short amount of time, which may be perceived as the child making a quick transition between

emotional states; experiencing grief bursts (outbursts of brief and intense emotion); or as not expressing the amount of distress expected by others (Corless, Germino, & Pittman, 1995; Oltjenbruns, 2001; Wolfelt, 1996).

Children make sense of their world and create meaning of their experiences through play (Wolfelt, 1996). "Play is the most basic way children symbolically express their feelings" (Bertman, 1999). Thus, a child's grief may manifest itself more through experiential activity and creative expression than through outward emotional expression or verbal articulation. In a study on the effects of music therapy-based bereavement groups on mood and behavior of grieving children, Hilliard (2001) reports a strong, significant effect using music therapy in a group format with grieving children. His subjects showed significant reductions in emotional, cognitive, and physical complaints, and in behavioral problems as compared to a no-contact control group.

Hilliard (2001) points out that children not only experience grief differently, they also may lack the verbal skills necessary to express their feelings and thus begin developing coping strategies. He cites Bright (1986) as noting how important it is to use symbolic and nonverbal means of expression in the treatment of grieving children.

This might include using art, story-telling, poetry, play, sand trays, and so on.

Various researchers have reached different understandings about childhood grief experiences. Worden (1982) posits that a coherent mental representation of important attachment figures and object constancy must be grasped for mourning to occur. However, other grief counselors and care providers assert that a child begins mourning in infancy with the behavioral manifestations appearing as increased crying, changes in eating and sleeping patterns, and regressive behaviors (Busch & Kimble, 2001; Wolfelt, 1996).

Existing stage theories of grief work attempt to provide a framework for understanding the process of childhood grief. Stage theories suggest that children generally move through distinguishable stages in response to death (Doka, 1995). The initial stage is marked by a child failing to grasp the finality of death, often expressing the idea that death is reversible or can be avoided. Subsequently, children may grasp the finality of death, while paradoxically continuing to hold the belief that death can be avoided. This is often followed by a stage in which children grasp both the finality and the universality of death. Limitations of stage theories

include the potential to minimize the complexity of human experience through the use of stereotypical sequencing of stages and the creation of misleading correlations between chronological age and cognitive development. Even with these limitations, researchers and clinicians have developed general age-based guidelines with significant clinical relevance.

Developmental Influences on Childhood Grief

Although every child experiences and expresses grief uniquely, an overview of children's concepts and common manifestations of grief can serve as a useful guide. Table 1 outlines children's cognitive understanding of and reactions to death by general age range. The age ranges are not intended to be exact, but the outline offers a representation of different developmental stages and corresponding reactions.

Table 1. Overview of a Child's Conceptions of and Typical Responses to Death by Developmental Age Range

Age Group	Concepts & Typical Responses
Infant (0-2)	Sense separation or absence of decedent Communicate being upset (e.g. increase in crying, thumb sucking, biting, clinginess)

Preschool (3-6)	Conceive of death as temporary Repetitive questioning Reenact death during play Nightmares Sadness, aggression, regression, non-compliance
Grade school (6-11)	Clearer understanding of finality of death Magical thinking May exhibit difficult behaviors due to uncertainty about how else to express or vent feelings May exhibit physical symptoms of deceased
Adolescents (12+)	Understanding of death as irreversible, universal, and inevitable. Anger, feeling life is unfair Increase in harmful and dangerous behaviors Social withdrawal Increased abstract and philosophical reasoning (Busch & Kimball, 2001; Wolfelt 1996)

As an alternative, task-based descriptions of childhood grief minimize the limitations existent in stage-based models. Worden (1996,1982) outlines four tasks of mourning:

1. Accept the reality of the loss;
2. Deal with the emotional impact of the loss and acknowledge feelings related to the death;
3. Adjust to an environment which no longer includes the deceased; and
4. Emotionally relocate the deceased and reinvest emotional energy in the living.

Wolfelt (1996) included the themes within Worden's tasks in a model identifying six reconciliation needs specifically for grieving children.

Need 1: Acknowledge the Reality of the Death

Gently confronting the reality that a significant person has died and will not return is important to healing. Although children may be too young to fully understand, they are not too young to feel and must be provided with an honest and open explanation about the death. A child's ability to acknowledge the reality of death is supported by opportunities to talk, play, and act-out circumstances related to the death (Wolfelt, 1996).

Need 2: Move toward the pain of the loss while being nurtured physically, emotionally, and spiritually

Children need permission to grieve and to mourn.

Following a death, a bereaved child needs encouragement to be with the wide range of thoughts and feelings related to their loss. It is not uncommon in the United States for adults to attempt to protect children from feelings of discomfort, fear or anxiety. An approach which does not allow children to express and explore their pain may inhibit growth.

Need 3: Convert the relationship with the person who has died from one of presence to one of memory.

Following the death of a significant person, it is necessary to shift the relationship from one of presence in the "here and now" to one of memory (Wolfelt, 1996). Rather than implying that all ties are severed with the deceased, children hold memories, dreams, and legacies that form a very different and continued relationship with the deceased. This affirms the value of the relationship to the child by valuing experiences and memories. Wolfelt notes that children whose memories hold painful emotional or physical experiences are naturally reluctant to embrace memories openly. Special support is warranted to

facilitate placing these memories in perspective and addressing the underlying sadness and anger.

Need 4: Develop a new self-identity based on a life without the person who died.

The death of a family member often permanently changes a child's sense of personal identity. Social and functional role changes, behavioral changes, and altered routines influence the child's self-perception.

Need 5: Relate the experience of the death to a context of meaning.

The death of a loved one alters an individual's perception of the meaning and purpose of life and of living. "How" and "Why" questions weave through a child's search for meaning.

Need 6: Experience a continued supportive adult presence in future years.

Adult caregivers who appreciate the enormous impact of loss on children and can serve as a stabilizing force in a child's life are essential figures. Wolfelt (1996) explains, "grief is a process, not an event. The long-term nature of grief means that bereaved children will need adult "stabilizers" in their lives long after the event of the death" (p. 116). Following

a series of interviews with bereaved individuals, Simon and Drantell (1998) remarked, "Time does not heal wounds; it merely helps you get used to them" (p. 23).

Worden (1996) believes that if a child does not adequately engage in these tasks, he/she is likely to display symptoms of depression or have difficulty forming close relationships as an adult.

Complicating the resolution of these tasks is the fact that the death of a family member affects every member of the family, decreasing the emotional support available for the child (Nadeau, 2001). According to Worden (1982), "Most families exist in some type of homeostatic balance and the loss of a significant person in that family group can unbalance this homeostasis" (p.97). Loss also frequently leads to additional losses referred to as secondary losses: the loss of income; a change in friends; a transition between schools or homes; and/or alternative caregivers.

Attachment Considerations

A discussion of the concept of attachment provides a more complete picture of the impact the death of a family member has on a child. James (1994) defines attachment as "a reciprocal, enduring, emotional, and physical affiliation between a child and a caregiver" (p. 2). A

child's attachment figure serves as a protector, provider, and guide as the child develops (James, 1994). British psychiatrist, Bowlby (1973, 1980), dedicated his career to researching the tendency in human beings to form strong affectionate bonds with others. He also observed the intense emotional reaction following a break in attachment bonds. Bowlby (1980) proposed that attachment arises from early instinctual needs for security and safety, and observed that attachments typically developed between children and significant caregivers within six months of life. These bonds were noted to endure throughout the life cycle.

Bowlby observed children in out-of-home placements who were no longer residing with primary care givers. He noted that children anticipating separation from significant caregivers exhibited a distinct behavioral sequence marked by protest, despair and detachment (Osterweis, Solomon & Green, 1984). When the bond was restored, the protests stopped and the distress decreased. Bowlby's work suggests a sequence that parallels the response of young children following the death of a parent. Indeed, research conducted by Parkes (2001) in collaboration with Bowlby "revealed changes in the psychological features of grief that resembled the sequence of changes that had been reported by

Robertson and Bowlby in separated children" (p. 29). It goes without saying: Parentally bereaved children are separated.

Attachment theory would predict enormous psychological consequences in the case of the permanent and sudden loss of a primary caretaker. Indeed, recent research investigating the influence of the death of parents on school children concluded that "the early loss of both parents through death could predispose an individual to develop some emotional difficulties such as depression later in adult life" (Ifeagwazi & Obieze, 2001, p. 151).

Specific Vulnerabilities of Youth

As soon as the human infant arrives, it begins relating to the surrounding world, taking in vast amounts of information, interacting with life, actively trying to make sense of the world within the limits of ever-changing and evolving skills and abilities. Human development is complex and nonlinear. Humans develop behaviorally, emotionally, socially, physically, cognitively and spiritually. In an ideal world, perhaps human youth would be protected from the harsh realities of hunger, abuse, neglect, and the death of loved ones. However, this isn't the case. During childhood and adolescence, many children experience the death of a family member. Survey results

vary, but as noted earlier, some research suggests that as many as "one out of every 20 American children under age 15 loses one or both parents due to death " (Steen, as cited in Busch & Kimble, 2001). The death of a family member will affect all areas of a child's development (Doka, 1995; Oltjenbruns, 2001).

When a parent or sibling dies, some researchers argue that children are at risk for abnormal or complicated grief reactions due to struggles with their own developmental issues (Doka, 1995; Worden, 1982). Complicated responses to grief may include chemical abuse, eating disorders, sustained withdrawal, specific anxiety states, depression, acting out behaviorally, and challenges or changes in relationships (Brabant, 1993). Other researchers argue that "complicated bereavement" is a redundant phrase for children (Silverman, personal communication, 2000). Phyllis Silverman, Ph.D., a leading author and mental health professional in the field of grief and loss, explained to a group of bereavement group facilitators that when a parent or sibling dies, grief is always complicated.

When a family member dies, the entire family system is deeply affected at many levels. The support available for children may be limited when surviving parents or siblings as well as extended family members, also are grieving

(Hilliard, 2001; Pfeffer, Jiang, & Kakuma, 2002). Research on the effect of parental bereavement indicates that bereaved parents display higher levels of depression, anxiety, somatic symptoms, and lower perceptions of self-esteem and sense of control in life when compared to non-bereaved parents (Videka-Sherman, 1987). Additionally, a child's death can have serious effects on a marital relationship (Schwab, 1992). In a preliminary study, Schwab (1992) noted that following the death of a child, couples expressed more irritability and less tolerance of one another, withdrew physically and emotionally from one another, and often temporarily halted communication altogether. Distress is often reported years after the death of a family member (Lehman, Wortman & Williams, 1987; Videka-Sherman, 1987). Consequently, bereaved parents may not be able to provide as much emotional support and stability for their grieving child as they would like.

Conceptualizing Children's Grief

*Daybreak, My eyes follow the
Angel of Death... My lips begin to whisper on
Their own; I don't understand, I don't understand, no
I shall never understand. Elie Weisel (from Fumia, 2000)*

In an effort to understand the issues related to children's grief, it is helpful to explore the ways

children comprehend the concept of death and the cognitive and affective components which enter into that understanding. Striving to comprehend the concept of death poses a difficult challenge for anyone, regardless of age and developmental level. In the investigation of children's understanding of death, researchers Busch and Kimble (2001), and Doka, (1995), point to five sub-concepts tied into this understanding:

1. Universality - All living things eventually die;
2. Irreversibility - The death of the physical body is permanent;
3. Nonfunctionality - Body functions such as breathing, walking, dreaming and feeling no longer occur.
4. Abstract and realistic causality - Ponderings contemplate what it is that brings about the death of a living being; and
5. Meaning attribution or acknowledgement of continued life - Beliefs about what happens after the death of the physical body are explored.

Death can be a puzzling concept. Although every human encounters death and death-related issues and concerns

throughout life, arriving at an understanding is a complex and complicated process. Current research exploring children's conceptions of death seeks more completely to understand how children wrap their minds around the concept of death and come to understand the related concepts mentioned above. Kenyon's (2001) research indicates that by age 10, young people are generally familiar with components of "irreversibility, universality, nonfunctionality, personal mortality, and causality (p. 63)." The acquisition of abstract components are influenced by cognitive development, verbal skills, and range of experiences. Of course, familiarity with these concepts is far different from fully understanding their function and impact on the experiences of life and death. In fact, "every day living" and emotional life may seem to contradict what the mind understands.

Supporting Bereaved Children

Human beings are not born once and for all on the day their mothers give birth to them, but . . . life obliges them over and over again to give birth to themselves.

(Gabriel Garcia Marquez, as cited in Andrews, 1999, p. 35)

Doka (1995) recommends that family members, health care providers, teachers and clergy respect the parents' desires regarding the timing of different types of help.

Involving children in the ceremonies for the deceased enables them to create meaning with a ritual closing and commemorate the event (Goldman, 2001; James, 1994; Nadeau, 2001). Children express their feelings and experiences through play and metaphor (Doka, 1995; James, 1994; Wolfelt, 1996). Through drawing, story-telling and play scenarios children may work through the loss and begin to make some sense out of the separation from a loved one.

Doka (1995) clarifies that professional help is not always needed for bereaved children, though supportive experiences can help. He contends that for the usual kinds of death from age or illness, children cope and continue to develop positively within a loving, caring support system. He acknowledges that in cases involving a violent death, the assistance of a well-trained professional is warranted. This refers to death resulting from natural or human-generated disaster including avalanche, tornado, earthquakes, flooding, individual or mob attacks, or riots and war zones. These events elicit anxiety and fear in survivors, and the distress of caregivers amplifies children's emotional reactions. Grief counselors draw attention to other variables which may hinder the grief process (Busch & Kimble, 2001; Wolfelt, 1996; Worden, 1982). Relational, historical, personality, social and

circumstantial factors can complicate mourning. Highly ambivalent relationships may lead to excessive amounts of anger and guilt which cause the survivor difficulty. In circumstances of multiple losses (e.g., fires, airplane crashes, or mass suicides), "the sheer volume of people to be grieved was overwhelming" (Worden, 1982, p.55).

Complicated grief reactions in the past have an impact on current losses and increase the probability of subsequent complicated grief reactions. In addition, there is great variability with individuals' ability to cope with emotional distress (Kranzler, Shaffer, Wasserman & Davies, 1990). Finally, social factors can strongly influence grief reactions. These include: a) Cases in which a death is considered socially unspeakable (e.g. suicide); b) Incidents in which the loss is socially negated (e.g. abortion); and c) Grieving in the absence of social support due to geography or social isolation (Pfeffer, Jiang, & Tatsayuki, 2002; Goldman, 2001; Worden, 1982).

Grief Counseling

You do not preach to them, you do not say anything to them. You let the child draw a picture and let him share with you what it means to him, and give him a safe place where he can externalize his rage, his anger, his sense of unfairness and his tremendous

grief. And then, when he has poured out all that anguish and anger, only then we begin to help him to understand... And we do it with compassion. Not with judgment.

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross (1995, p. 63).

The goal of grief counseling is to help individuals *through* the grief, not around it (Busch & Kimble, 2001; Wolfelt, 1996). Research has shown that grief counseling can help facilitate the tasks of mourning (Busch & Kimble, 2001; Wolfelt, 1996; Worden, 1982). Professionals can help children deal with the immediate fears and related symptoms (e.g., nightmares, loss of appetite, and inappropriate aggression), as well as help prevent future consequences (e.g., flashbacks of the death, difficulty engaging in relationships, and perpetual feelings of vulnerability). James (1994) explains that children's' grief, "happens in waves of overwhelming pain, interspersed with periods of respite. Caregivers cannot hurry it up or cut it off, lest the mourning process go underground, still ever present but unseen" (p.89).

Alan Wolfelt (1996) offers the term "companion" to embrace the role of adults in children's journey through grief and mourning. In his words:

Companioning is about honoring the spirit;

it is not about focusing on the intellect.

Companioning is about learning from others;

it is not about teaching them.

Companioning is about walking alongside;

it is not about leading or being led.

Companioning is about being still; it is not about
frantic movement forward.

Companioning is about discovering the gifts
of sacred silence; it is not about filling every
painful moment with talk.

Companioning is about listening with the heart; it is
not about analyzing with the head.

Companioning is about bearing witness to the struggles
of others; it is not about judging or directing those
struggles.

Companioning is about being present to another
person's pain; it is not about taking away or
relieving the pain.

Companioning is about respecting disorder and
confusion; it is not about imposing order and logic.

Companioning is about going to the wilderness of the
soul with another human being; it is not about
thinking you are responsible for finding the way out.

(2001, p. 5)

Group work as a preferred method. Group work with children can foster feelings of trust, safety and joy; support the development of positive coping strategies; and provide opportunities for verbal and non-verbal reflection and self-expression (Sommers-Flanagan, Barrett-Hakanson, Clarke, & Sommers-Flanagan, 2000). Bereavement counselors and researchers often advocate for the use of group interventions when working with bereaved youth (Belangie, 1992; Black & Simpson-Adams, 1991; Busch & Kimball, 2001; Healy-Romanello, 1993; Mulcahey & Young, 1995; Thompson, 1996). Group interventions offer children the opportunity to share feelings, explore beliefs, and interact with other youth with similar experiences (Corey & Corey, 1992; Hilliard, 2001). Specific bereavement groups assist members with clarifying and accepting a range of feelings, and by providing a supportive place to share their personal experiences (Busch & Kimball, 2001; Pfeffer, Jiang & Kakuma, 2002; Thompson, 1996). Additionally, participating in a group with other individuals who have also experienced the death of a family member allows a child to feel less isolated in his or her experience. Yalom's (1995) therapeutic factors of universality and instillation of hope are clearly central to group work involving bereavement and loss.

Innovative settings and alternatives. Just as in other types of counseling and psychotherapy with children, grief counseling does not always take place in a professional office. Counseling can occur in various parts of a hospital, in a home setting, or outdoors (Fletcher & Hinkle, 2002; Worden, 1982). Cohen (1993), a strong advocate for the use of natural settings in counseling work, suggests that backyards, parks, and wilderness can become partners for change, healing, and growth.

Numerous programs for children provide group work in outdoor settings (Gass, 1993). Information about camps for bereaved children is becoming increasingly common. Camp Comfort in Goochland, Virginia, offers an annual 3-5 day program for children grieving the death of a loved one (Cheakalos & Foster, 2001). The camp combines traditional camp activities with activities designed to assist the participants in dealing with their losses. The common bond, the death of a loved one, decreases feelings of isolation in participants. In Montana, the camp reflected in this dissertation has offered programs for grieving children since 1997, providing a five-day camp on Seeley Lake which includes a range of activities designed to promote fun, foster cohesion, and facilitate grief.

When support programs for children are moved beyond the confines of offices and schedules into the great outdoors, potential benefits, ethical challenges, and facilitator skill requirements deserve special consideration. Thus, it becomes necessary to review at least the basic paradigms and research outcomes associated with outdoor or nature-based counseling efforts.

Outdoor-based Counseling Interventions

Fletcher and Hinkle (2002) offer the following historical summary of outdoor-based efforts:

According to Gibson's (1979) historical account of the literature, experiential education and therapeutic wilderness programs first began in the United States in state hospitals, camps for children and adolescents, and later with Outward Bound (OB). In 1901, an overcrowding problem at Manhattan State Hospital in New York City resulted in having patients live in tents on hospital ground. Patients receiving "tent treatment" both tubercular and psychiatric, demonstrated improved mental and physical health. Similarly, summer camps for children and adolescents originated in the United States in 1861; however, it was not until 1930 that helping

professionals became aware of the psychological needs of children and how "therapeutic" camping could facilitate those needs. (Fletcher & Hinkle, p. 1).

Indeed, since the emergence of early out-of-doors therapeutic programs, there has been an explosion in the number and variety of nature-based programs. What exactly makes the outdoors "therapeutic" is still under exploration. The improvements noted in the Manhattan State Hospital East tent-based patients, both physically and psychologically, was striking to administrators, prompting the placement of a wider variety of patients in the tents on the grounds. According to Caplan (1974, as cited in Davis-Berman, Berman, and Capone, 1994), continued dramatic improvements were noted. An understanding of what leads to the positive physical and psychological responses to nature-based settings is unclear. What is clear is that it is estimated that currently Americans spend over 95% of their time indoors, removed from the immersion in the natural landscape - removed from the smells, sounds, and textures of the natural world, from the direct contact with sunshine, with wind, with rain.

Nabhan and Trimble (1994) emphasize the importance of nature, stating that

"as children, we need time to wander, to be outside, to nibble on icicles and watch ants, to build with dirt and sticks in a hollow of the earth, to lie back and contemplate clouds and chickadees. These simple acts forge the connections that define a land of one's own-home and refuge for both girls and boys. Mentors help, answering questions we bring back from the land. With these childhood experiences we begin. They form the secure foundation to which we return again and again in our struggle to be strong and connected, to be complete. (p.75)

Outdoor-based counseling interventions encompass a variety of adventure and therapy programs. These include: therapeutic adventure programs, adventure challenge therapy, camping therapy, wilderness therapy, outdoor therapy, and experiential challenge programs. The duration of these programs ranges from hours to weeks or months. Similarly, the settings differ dramatically, from desert programs, to mountain-based experiences, to remote wilderness or combinations of environments. Programs may occur in every season, incorporating activities as the

environment and conditions allow. Program philosophies, missions, and staffing patterns vary. Indeed, there is no standard referred to as "outdoor-based counseling interventions."

Although there are many accepted methods of outdoor-based counseling, a review of the literature reveals several components which appear to provide a theoretical foundation for most programs. Following is an outline of principles that provide the rationale and framework for outdoor-based counseling experiences generalized to therapeutic camp programs compiled from related research literature (Gass, 1993; Kimball & Bacon, 1993; Mitten, 1994):

1. Action-centered therapy - Outdoor-based programs are conducive to active and multidimensional experiences (Gass, 1993). Interactions involve physical and affective activities in addition to cognitive processes. The activities provide opportunities for non-verbal interaction between participants.
2. Unfamiliar environment - As the name implies, wilderness therapy or outdoor-based programs are conducted out-of-doors. Programs that immerse participants in new and unique

environments can provide a contrast to a familiar environment, which can facilitate the development of new perspectives (Gass, 1993).

3. Small group cohesion - The camp experience is a group process. Participants experience the program in the context of being part of a group and tend to be strongly bonded with their group at the conclusion of the program (Kimball & Bacon, 1993). Groups provide a unique opportunity for youth to be instrumental in one another's growth and process. Participants support one another in the struggle for self-understanding as the group environment provides a chance for children and adolescents to express themselves and be heard by their peers (Corey & Corey, 1992). Gass (1993) argues that incorporating small-group development activities is a crucial part of adventure therapy programming. Group cohesion can increase positive group interactions and increase group members' abilities to respond to and support each other through stressful situations.

4. Role of therapist - As is the case with many professional relationships, outdoor program leaders and participants enter into relationships with defined roles and goals. Counselors accept responsibility for creating and maintaining an environment that is emotionally and physically safe (Corey & Corey, 1992; Mitten, 1994). The dynamic between therapist and client differs when counseling moves outside the office into an outdoor setting. Experiential activities require the counselor to accept an active role. Gass (1993) explains that counselors "actively design and frame adventure experiences around critical issues for clients" (p.8). Activities, including structured initiatives and naturally occurring challenges, sides being enjoyable are often used as a medium to facilitate the program participant's process. Metaphors that arise are used as a means to link or connect a current scenario with a participant's real world interactions beyond the activity (Stouffer, 1999).

Another difference in the counselor/client dynamic in outdoor settings centers around the participation in shared experiences. This contrasts with the barriers which limit interaction between client and counselor in more formal therapies. Mitten (1994) emphasizes that leaders must constantly assess whether activities and adventures are being suggested out of self-interest. A guiding treatment plan, and clear goals and objectives help distinguish the appropriateness of therapeutic activities. Counselors in outdoor settings maintain clear and appropriate boundaries, while achieving more holistic interaction with clients.

In general, outdoor-based experiences are not used to replace other therapeutic interventions; instead they are often "used to enhance established treatment objectives and to provide a richer therapeutic environment" (Gass, 1993 p.5). Parker and Stoltenberg (1995) investigated the use of adventure as an adjunct to traditional counseling. The 84 adolescent participants were randomly assigned to four groups: counseling only, adventure only, counseling and adventure interventions, and a no intervention control. A variety of pre and post questionnaires and scales did not reveal improvement for the adventure-only or control groups. Gains were noted and maintained from pretest to follow-up for the counseling-and-adventure intervention

group. "This indicates that the only significant long-term influence of the adventure interventions occurred when they were integrated with on-going counseling" (Parker and Stoltenberg, 1995, p. 1378).

Other researchers have pointed to potential benefits of immersion in the natural world. In his exploration of the therapeutic effects of wilderness, Miles (1993) refers to three progressive benefits. Initially, individuals identify an increased awareness of their own relationship with the physical surroundings. Secondly, they report an increase in self-confidence and a feeling of tranquility. Finally, individuals achieve a psychological space described as contemplation or reflection.

The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely, or unhappy is to go outside, where they can be alone with the heavens and nature. Only then does one feel that all is as it should be. Nature brings solace to all troubles (Anne Frank, as cited in Rutherford, 1995).

Counseling Camps

"In the 'great, fresh' unblighted, unredeemed wilderness' people will find hope."

John Muir (from Gass, 1993, p. 43).

Although an array of books and articles exist depicting adventure programs, long-term wilderness trips for delinquent adolescents, and ropes-course based challenge courses, most professionals agree that a strong efficacy research base is lacking (Gass 1994). Even less research exists focusing on short-term camps centered around particular themes or special needs, such as bereavement. Levitt (1994) conducted a literature review focused on the effect of therapeutic camping for emotionally disturbed girls. Many of her literature sources were limited to programs for chronic psychiatric patients or alternatives to residential treatment. Kaplan and Talbot researched the psychological benefits of wilderness (Gass, 1993). They state "people find experiences in natural environments highly satisfying and that they highly value the benefits which they perceive themselves to derive from experiences there" (Gass, 1993, p.44).

The search for healing in wild places and the exploration of contact with nature and outdoor recreation has become organized and institutionalized. Kaplan and Talbot (cited in Gass, 1993) identified three benefits of wilderness-based experiences:

1. Increased awareness of the relationship with the physical world and a comfort that comes with an effortless attention to one's surroundings.
2. Increased self-confidence and a feeling of tranquility. "By relinquishing the illusion of control over the environment, people paradoxically acquire more internal control and can relax and pay more attention to their surroundings and to their inner selves (p.46).
3. Contemplation facilitates reflection and self-discovery, a self "less conflicted, more integrated and more desirable" (p. 46).

Many of these benefits parallel the virtues of "Flow" described by Csikszentmihalyi as:

The holistic sensation present when we act with total involvement... It is the state in which action follows upon action according to an internal logic which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part. We experience it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next in which we are in control of our actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment; between stimulus and response;

or between past, present, and future (as cited in Gass, 1993, p. 58).

Csiksaentimihalyi (1990) describes a deep immersion in process where time and the appearance of things cease to matter.

Bereavement camp programs are beginning to emerge. Newspaper accounts describe two programs in Montana, and a mental health worker announced a New York-based bereavement camp over the International Counseling Network List Serv. Camp Comfort, a bereavement camp in Goochland, Virginia, opened in May of 1999 (Cheakalos & Foster, 2001). Bereavement camps can help reduce isolation (Busch & Kimble, 2001) as children are surrounded with an understanding peer group. Leslie Delp, Camp Mend A Heart Coordinator, explains:

At camp, the children have an opportunity to meet and make friends with other children like themselves while they learn all about the process grown-ups call bereavement. And the kids are also treated to fun, games, camping, and activities galore! (from Wolfelt, 1996, p. 223).

At this time, research and publications focusing on bereavement camps are rare. It is important to recognize that by working with special populations, outdoor-based

therapists must operate with the tools and understanding of both the wilderness instructor and the mental health professional (Fletcher & Hinkle, 2002; Phipps & Swiderski, 1990). Phipps and Swiderski (1990) explain that the "soft skills" of outdoor leadership are the social, psychological and communication components, or the interpersonal, people skills in the field. These skills, more often associated with traditional counseling, would include skills with group dynamics; conflict resolution; establishing rapport and cohesion; creating a safe, trustworthy climate, and analytical/creative problem-solving skills. In addition, the authors recognize the necessity of "hard skills" in outdoor-based settings. Hard skills refer to first-aid skills; an understanding of environmental ethics; water and land-based competencies such as canoeing, hiking, and fishing; and the development and implementation of sound safety procedures. "Hard skills include not only the ability to perform physical and technical tasks, but also the ability to manage the activity while others engage in the task" (Fletcher & Hinkle, 2002).

Childhood bereavement is a complex and highly individualized experience influenced by a large number of developmental, personal, and situational factors. Exploring the bridge between childhood bereavement and outdoor-based

counseling programs can provide invaluable information for mental health professionals involved in the challenge of providing supportive, non-stigmatizing programs to facilitate youth bereavement.

There are several good reasons we should confront death in the course of therapy. First, keep in mind that therapy is a deep and comprehensive exploration into the course and meaning of one's life; given the centrality of death in our existence, given that life and death are interdependent, how can we possibly ignore it? From the beginning of written thought, humans have realized that everything fades, that we fear the fading, and that we must find a way to live despite the fear and the fading. Irvin Yalom (2002, p. 125)

Chapter Three

Methodology

Following a comprehensive review of the most widely used and promising scales in the assessment and study of grief responses, Neimeyer and Hogan (2000) illuminated the potential contributions of qualitative research in the study of bereavement:

Even at this germinal stage in the application of qualitative paradigms to the study of loss, it is clear that they begin to paint a picture of bereavement that is far more complex and less tidy than that suggested by the artificially simplified and controlled canvasses of quantitative questionnaires. This is not to say, however, that the results of such studies are without meaningful patterning. To the contrary, they hint that there are multiple levels of order nested in the manifest "disorder" of grieving,... Because they are less apt to be constrained by investigator preconceptions than are quantitative approaches relying on ready-made questionnaires, qualitative approaches such as grounded theory,... are better positioned to introduce novelty, scope, and depth to the study of bereavement.... If used creatively and critically, qualitative approaches can

help suggest more trenchant theories of bereavement, which can then be tested and refined using more precise quantitative methods (p. 113).

Qualitative research is appropriate in social settings to seek understanding about the meaning of participant experiences in the participant's own terms (Janesick, 2000). This differs from a quantitative project which may aggregate large numbers of people without the necessity of face-to-face contact and communication. The questions of the researcher will be quite different in quantitative and qualitative explorations. Questions suited to qualitative inquiry include those concerning the quality of an existing program and questions about the meaning of an experience (Janesick, 2000). This paper explores how participants perceive a bereavement camp experience and what aspects are found to be meaningful. Specifically, the project investigates the questions: (1) How can bereavement camp experiences be structured to support a child's bereavement process; and, (2) What aspects of the camp did participants experience as most helpful? The qualitative paradigm provides the foundation from which the research questions will be explored.

Valerie Janesick (2000), an ethnographic researcher and dance choreographer, offers a useful metaphor drawing

parallels between qualitative research and dance improvisation. Janesick points out that:

Just as the choreographer relies on the spine of the dancer for the power and coherence of the dance, the qualitative researcher relies on the design of the study. Both are elastic. Like the dancer who finds her center from the base of the spine and the connection between the spine and the body, the qualitative researcher is centered by a series of design decisions (p. 383).

Beyond its appropriateness in this particular inquiry, the qualitative paradigm is congruent with my beliefs and values as a researcher (and as a choreographer). Indeed, qualitative research is a broad and complex field of inquiry crosscutting disciplines and subject matters. A definition of this mode of inquiry must embrace the historical complexity and nuances underlying usage. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) offer a generic definition of qualitative research as:

A situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews,

conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p. 3).

Embracing the notion that multiple realities exist, qualitative research relies on case studies; personal experience; life stories; cultural texts; observation; interviews; and visual texts that interact to help describe meanings in individuals' lives. Each practice illuminates the world in a different way. Thus, the use of multiple practices within any inquiry provides more thorough visibility of the phenomenon under study.

Qualitative researchers often work with a small sample size or few subjects, seeking depth, rather than breadth in their inquiries. Qualitative research acknowledges the interactive influence of the researcher and informant, recognizes that inquiry is inevitably value bound, and, lastly, that working hypotheses are time and context bound.

Characteristics of qualitative research that underline it's applicability in this project include: a) Qualitative research tends to take place in a natural setting (Bogdan &

Biklen, 1992; Creswell, 1994); b) The self is regarded as an important research instrument or tool (Janesick, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985); c) Qualitative research is focused on the larger picture and searching for understanding of the whole rather than proving something (Janesick, 2000); d) Qualitative methods tend to be inductive rather than deductive. Information is gained from a small number of informants in great detail and then used to raise questions or posit inquiries about generalizations (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992); and e) Grounded theory is an important part of qualitative research. Rather than acting on existing assumptions, theory emerges from the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The focus is on understanding social settings, not necessarily making predictions about the settings (Janesick, 2000). These characteristics illuminate the framework upon which I base my investigation.

I am choosing to center my research within a qualitative design because specific qualitative modes of inquiry are the most conducive to gathering information related to my specific research questions.

Data Collection

Data for the study was generated by research on bereaved youth, their parents or guardians, and analysis of archival texts. The human dimensions of this experience can

be reflected in many ways. Data collection techniques will include semi-structured interviews with campers, semi-structured interviews with parents or guardians, participant observation in the camp setting, and document analysis using archival data.

The term triangulation is used to refer to and argue for the use of combining methods in research. The concept of triangulation argues that the bias inherent in particular sources of data and methods "would be neutralized when used in conjunction with other data sources, investigators, and methods" (Creswell, 1994). In this case the results from the various methods allow for the consideration of areas of convergence or discrepancies in the data; illuminate different facets or individualized perceptions of the bereavement camp; and expand the data, adding scope and breadth to the investigation.

Semi-structured interviews

"Although talk is sometimes seen as trivial ("mere talk), it has increasingly become recognized as the primary medium through which social interaction takes place" (Silverman, 2000, p. 821).

Interviews with camp participants and their parents or guardians following the bereavement camp experience provides information about how informants perceive

bereavement camp and how they describe the experience in their own words. "For the qualitative-minded researcher, the open-ended interview apparently offers the opportunity for an authentic gaze into the soul of another, or even for a politically correct dialogue in which researcher and researched offer mutual understanding and support"

(Silverman, 2000, p. 822-833). Early in the interview, it is important to inform the interviewee about the purpose of the interview and clarify any limits to confidentiality (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Patton (1983) suggests that good interview questions are open-minded, neutral, sensitive and clear. An interview guide, or a list of issues to be explored during the course of the interview, helps ensure that the interviews with different people focus upon the areas of interest (Patton, 1983). A researcher can ask for clarification of added detail to gain information about unfamiliar responses or elaboration through the use of probes. Semi-structured interviews provide a data-gathering system which can be fairly conversational and individualized within a structure.

For this project, two different interview protocols were developed; a camper protocol and a guardian protocol. The rationale for utilizing an interview guide is to follow a framework which will provide comparable data related to

the research questions across the interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

With informant consent, a recording of the interview allows the researcher to transcribe a verbatim account of the interview, which can be a valuable record for data analysis. Early ethnographers relied on field notes to record their observations. The preference of audio recordings arose from an awareness of the inability to rely on individual recollection of events and conversations. In addition to the more complete and authentic summary of the interview, the tape and transcript can be replayed and reviewed, allowing for more thorough interaction with the material. Close repeated listenings of the tapes with a draft transcript "often reveals previously unnoted recurring features" (Silverman, 2000).

However thorough the transcript, Silverman (2000) challenges the possibility of completeness in data. He emphasizes the importance of clarifying what is being explored or investigated, and ways of making progress toward illuminating that investigation.

Participant observation involves the researcher moving beyond the role of detached observer into the role of participant in a round of activities in the lives of people or programs under study (Crane & Angrosino, 1984). In a

camp situation, a nonparticipant observer could have difficulty being discreet. Participation leads to engaging in activities and routines that can facilitate the development of rapport between researcher and participants. As a participant observer in the bereavement camp setting, I will be observing at different levels at different times. My field notes contain information about the setting, specific quotes, interactions, activities, and my personal reflections. One strategy researchers use if note-taking seems overly conspicuous is to retreat to a private place to document some words or phrases that will help recall (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Archival Data

Written documents or texts can be of great value in qualitative research. Text refers to "data consisting of words and images that have become recorded without the intervention of a researcher (e.g., through an interview)" (Silverman, 2000, p. 825). Accumulating existing documents and text can be of low cost, and the information held within may offer important perspectives for consideration or supplementation to an inquiry. Texts endure and are believed to offer historical insight (Hodder, 2000).

Exit interviews are conducted, compiled, and summarized as part of the evaluation process for the annual

A Camp to Remember. Each participant is interviewed with their parent or guardian at the end of camp as standard protocol. Camp staff execute the Exit Interviews following an established interview protocol or guide. Camper and parent responses are hand-written on the protocol by the interviewer at the time of the interview. The results of these interviews are considered in the data analysis of this project to incorporate the perceptions of a greater number of camp participants. Exit Interviews included in this project reflect participants at A Camp to Remember 2000 ($n = 35$) and 2002 ($n = 43$). The exit interviews are evaluated in relation to the full range of information elicited from other sources. Thus, the archival data provides an "other" against which the responses to the interviews conducted as part of this project can be evaluated and expanded.

Sample

The sample was selected from the pool of children attending A Camp to Remember, a bereavement camp in Western Montana. This bereavement camp provides a residential camp experience for boys and girls ages 8-17 who have experienced the death of a family member. Selection of participants was done through a process of purposeful sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Purposeful sampling

entails selecting participants based on their ability to contribute to the developing description of the bereavement camp experience. I chose particular individuals because of their willingness to participate in addition to their ability to articulate their experience, or to offer information regarding the topic of bereavement camps. This was a deliberate non-random process designed to obtain perceptive and reflective information about the experience.

The total number of participants in the study was 103 boys and girls attending A Camp to Remember in the summers of 1998, 2000, and 2002. This number includes duplications of campers who attended the program more than one session. Unduplicated statistics are not available from Families First through current tracking methods.

The sample of key informants for interviews includes 10 campers and their guardians. Five campers and their parents were interviewed following their participation in camp in 1998. Five additional campers and their parents were interviewed following their participation in camp during the summer of 2000. Two of the interviewees from 1998 were re-interviewed in 2000 in an effort to gain a longitudinal perspective of their perceptions of bereavement camp. Thus, the total number of key informants was ten ($n=10$). Parent interviews ($n=67$) were conducted to

add depth and increased perspective; to supplement camper interviews.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) recommend sampling widely enough to ensure that a diversity of types are explored. During my time in the field, I interacted with other campers, parents, and staff; however, particular individuals who were more willing to talk and display insight about their experience became key informants (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

An informed consent form was reviewed and signed prior to the interview process. Informed consent requires that interviewees voluntarily agree to participate and that their agreement is based on "full and open information" (Christians, 2000, p. 138-139). The purpose of my research was explained as a project to gain information from participants about their experience with the bereavement camp that could help guide further development and implementation of such programs. Consent was obtained to tape record and transcribe the interviews for this project. Pseudonyms of interviewees, other camp participants, and family members were used in place of names in the transcriptions. Each key informant was interviewed between 6 and 16 weeks after the camp experience.

Demographics

Table 2: Demographic Information: A Camp to Remember

Year	1998	2000	2002
Females	14	19	21
Males	11	16	22
Total	25	35	43
Average age:	10	10	10
Age Range:	7-13	7-15	6-17
Loss Experience:			
Relationship			
To decedent:			
Loss of Father	16	14	22
Loss of Mother	6	10	13
Loss of Sibling	2	0	1
Loss of Step-parent	1	7	5
Loss of extended Family or care provider	0	4	2
Anticipated	13	17	9
Unexpected/Sudden	12	19	34
Cause of Death:			
Accident	9	16	22
Illness	14	14	10
Suicide	1	2	7
Homicide	1	3	3
Unknown			1
Stigmatized loss (Suicide, AIDS, Homicide, other...)	2	7	10
Ave. Length of time Elapsed since death			
Mean	41 months	31 months	45 months
Median	32	29	21
Mode	6	3	25,40,54,73
Range	7/86-1/98	9/91-4/00	1/93-3/02
Multiple losses			
Within past 2 years	4	11	17

Data Analysis

Throughout the data analysis process I, sought to identify and describe patterns and themes from the interviews. Taped interviews were transcribed verbatim. I

followed the series of data analysis steps outlined by Straus and Corbin (1990) for grounded theory, or the constant comparative method. These steps involve labeling and classifying concepts. The researcher in this process constantly compares single incidents with other incidents until categories emerge (Creswell, 1994). Silverman (2000) identifies this form of content analysis as a favored method of analysis. After establishing categories which arise from sorting the data into piles, I counted the number of instances in each category and described the categories with the most instances. It is imperative that categories are "sufficiently precise to enable different coders to arrive at the same results" with the same body of material (Silverman, 2000, p. 826). Patterns and themes were explored.

Qualitative researchers seek appropriate terms to capture the essence of "can we trust this project"? An important consideration in the planning and implementation of qualitative research is trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness alludes to the extent to which a study is dependable, believable, and doing what it purports to do. Validity in quantitative research holds a set of technical micro-definitions not transferable to qualitative projects. In qualitative projects, validity deals with

descriptions and explanations, and more specifically, "whether or not the explanation fits the description... is the explanation credible?" (Janesick, 2000, p.393).

To increase the validity or rigor in qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest a variety of techniques: Triangulation, Prolonged Engagement, Peer Debriefing, and Audit Trail. "The combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives, and observers in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.5).

Triangulation refers to the combination of methodologies utilized in the investigation of a particular phenomenon (Jick, 1979). The efficacy of triangulation designs relies on the premise that the biases or weaknesses inherent in each single method will be neutralized by the counter-balancing strengths of another method. The individual modes of inquiry don't stand alone, but rather enlarge the understanding or expand upon the existing information when used in concert with a range of methods of data collection. In this case, the combination of interviewing, observation and analysis of archival data interact to provide a more comprehensive portrayal of the

bereavement camp experience. "Coherence is produced if the parts of the argument do not contradict each other and if the conclusions follow from the premises (Hodder, 2000, p. 712).

Prolonged Engagement requires that the researcher remain in the field sufficiently long to become aware of distortions that may creep into the data. In the camp study, the brevity of program duration (4-5 days each summer) allowed me, as the researcher, to be present for the duration of the program, decreasing the attention which could be directed toward a researcher entering or leaving a program in mid-stream.

Peer Debriefing is the process of exploring various aspects of the research project with a peer who is not emotionally involved with the inquiry to increase the researcher's awareness of personal biases or assumptions. In addition, this process can illuminate necessary areas for inquiry. Toward this end, I reviewed various stages of my thoughts, feelings and analysis with peers enrolled in a Phenomenological Research class; the lead staff for the SEASONS Bereavement programs; and my University advisor throughout this research process.

An Audit Trail consists of the stream of records stemming from the research project. Maintaining an

organized compilation of raw data, data reduction and analysis products, indications of data reconstruction, process notes, related materials, and instrument development information allows others to become familiar with the study and the structure of inquiry, as well as to determine the trustworthiness of the process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Verbatim transcriptions of taped interviews, interview protocols, demographics, and summaries of exit interviews are included in the appendices for consideration.

Additional Ethical Considerations

The ethical steps to safeguard against damage to humans involved in research by government agencies, including universities receiving federal support is monitored by Institutional Review Boards (IRBs). The three principles created to embrace the standards for research involving human subjects were published in the 1978 Belmont Report (1995) as: respect for persons (voluntary, informed participation), beneficence (do no harm), and justice (balancing benefits and burdens of research) (Christians, 2000; Cook, 1995).

Social science research requires that "research subjects have the right to be informed about the nature and consequences of experiments in which they are involved"

(Christians, 2000, p. 138). Rosenblatt (1995) points out that due to the unpredictable unfolding of qualitative interviews, the research process makes it impossible to warn or inform participants of everything that will occur during the interviews. He asserts that a qualitative interviewer can never give full information about a research project due to the impossibility of fully anticipating interviewee reactions in the research scenario. Rosenblatt argues for the use of "processual consent" during interviews to supplement the consent procedure mandated prior to the research (2000, p. 148). Processual consent involves giving people opportunities to stop the interview or to avoid a particularly difficult question throughout the interview process.

Beyond informed consent and confidentiality, ethics are set forth to help ensure that researchers conduct themselves to do no harm. Recent qualitative researchers take this ethic a step further, asking not only how to avoid harm, but how, if at all, the interview process can be mutually beneficial. This reflects the potential therapeutic benefits of interviewing while drawing distinct boundaries between research and therapy. This project is focused on research, not on therapy. "However, even if I am not engaged in therapeutic intervention, I think that as a

researcher talking to people about loss and grief, I must have therapist's skills in listening, acknowledging, avoiding being judgmental, bracketing personal reactions, supporting, knowing when to back off, and realizing that something has been misunderstood" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 149). While therapy is not the goal of the interaction, an interaction about a loss has the potential to be transformative or growth-producing; to provide new awarenesses and feelings of healing. However, the goal of the interaction presented is not on growth or healing. Cook and Bosley (1995) conducted a follow-up study of bereaved individuals who had participated in an interview inquiry about funeral rituals. This study revealed that respondents generally regarded the interview experience as positive. Participants perceived it as a beneficial opportunity to express their feelings about their loss.

A feminist communitarianism model has been put forth by Denzin (as cited in Christians, 2000). This model posits that human identity is created within a social arena, acknowledging our birth into a sociocultural universe where values, moral obligations or commitments, and existential meanings are negotiated through dialogue. Christians (2000) asserts that the "mission of social science research is enabling community life to prosper - enabling people to

come to mutually held conclusions" (p. 145). This view assumes that research is meant to be a collaborative venture in its design and participatory in its implementation. The conceptions of the participants guide the inquiry, before the expertise of the investigators and funding agencies. Christian's (2000) puts forth a model which resonates with cooperative mutuality, serving the community in which the research is executed rather than solely the community of knowledge producers and policy makers. Carol Gilligan has articulated an ethic of care (as cited in Christians, 2000). An interdependent sense of self, which embraces independent action while interacting cooperatively in relationship with others or a larger community, underlies this ethic of care. "Feminism.. critiques the conventions of impartiality and formality in ethics while giving precision to affection, intimacy, nurturing, egalitarian and collaborative processes, and empathy" (Christians, 2000, p. 143). This also pushes the professional ethic beyond "do no harm" to an ethic of care, or the possibility of mutual beneficiality.

Ultimately, grief researchers and qualitative interviewers must follow IRB policies and procedures, though some question is raised as to whether the policies

ostensibly protect the humans involved in research, or rather protect their own institutions (Christians, 2000). Using a qualitative method of inquiry, this project seeks to describe the ways camp experiences can be of the most therapeutic benefit to bereaved youth. The research design for this project encompasses a variety of qualitative techniques. A detailed examination of one setting, in this case of the bereavement A Camp to Remember, is a case study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). "Thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973) of individual experiences and perceptions will be enormously beneficial in the attempt to seek a clearer understanding of participant perceptions of the bereavement camp.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis and Results

The process of integrating the experience of losing a family member into one's life is complex and highly individualized. Bereavement programs and camps have been established to support grieving children and families amidst this transition. Personally, I have been actively involved in the development, implementation, and evaluation of A Camp to Remember, a bereavement camp in Western Montana. Since 1997, I have worked with a team of professionals and volunteers to offer a summer program for grieving children. Originally a four-day program based on Georgetown Lake, the camp is now a five-day program on the shores of Seeley Lake, Montana, filled with traditional camp activities and opportunities for commemorating deceased family members. Throughout the years, much of the camp program has remained the same. The program philosophy centers around Wolfelt's (1996) theme of companioning bereaved children. The schedule includes large- and small-group activities, verbal and non-verbal expression, quiet time and rambunctious time. Traditional camp activities (swimming, hiking, games, arts and crafts) are woven together with opportunities for commemorative rituals, sharing circles, and reflection. Other constants throughout

the years include a 3:1 camper to staff ratio; housing the campers in cabins with bunk beds; communal dining and camp fires; and a focus on immersion in the natural world and nature-based activities. Changes during the program's history include an increase in the number of participants (from 13 in 1997 to 43 in 2002); an increase in the length of the experience (from four to five days); a move from Georgetown Lake to Seeley Lake; and an expansion to serve a wider age range of participants. I am aware of the double-role I assume in this project: one as researcher, and one as camp director. While my deep engagement and investment in this project can enhance my understanding of the data, it also poses risks of over-identification or involvement with the findings. Indeed, I viewed and interacted with the experience through very different lenses. In this chapter, I will present the findings from the interviews and archival data with limited interaction, saving explorations and ponderings for the discussion section.

Data was collected using three main methods:

1) Semi-structured interviews with camp participants; 2) Semi-structured interviews with parents; and 3) Analysis of exit interviews or archival data.

Twelve interviews were conducted with 10 campers considered to be the key informants in this project. These

semi-structured interviews provided the foundation for this research investigating the perceived value and benefits of participation in a bereavement camp. These interviews were transcribed verbatim; read and reread numerous times; sorted utilizing a "cut-up-and-put-in-folders approach" to handling data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992); and coded categorically. Due to technical malfunction, one interview recording was inaudible, making transcription of that interview nearly impossible. The interviewees shared an enormous amount of complex information. While individuals differ in how they perceived and interacted with the camp experience, certain themes and commonalties weave throughout participant descriptions of their bereavement camp experience. In an effort to summarize the common themes which seemed to bind the 12 interviews together without minimizing the depth of unique sharing offered by each camper, I will focus upon themes that were presented in the majority of interviews and received the greatest emphasis.

Five distinct major codes or themes emerged from the data which embraced smaller categories or sub-codes that spoke to the research questions. These themes include: 1) Value of Connections with Peers and Staff; 2) Opportunities for Remembering or Commemorating; 3) Enjoyable Experiences;

4) Natural Setting/Nature-based Activities; and 5) Freedom to Be.

Interviews were also conducted with the parents of camper interviewees as an additional method of inquiry. Transcriptions of interviews with the parents of the 10 campers were sorted in the same method. Emergent topics shared by parents which speak to the dominant themes presented by campers are included with the results. Similarly, the exit interview documents from Families First Montana, representing interviews with 35 summer of 2000 campers and 43 campers from 2002, were thoroughly reviewed. Following a detailed presentation of the five themes most prevalent in the semi-structured interviews with key informants and with parents, findings from the exit interviews are presented. Pseudonyms are used throughout this document to protect the confidentiality and maintain the anonymity of child informants, parents or guardians, and other camp participants and staff.

"These themes may be seen as seeds. From these seeds will hopefully grow our understanding of the experience. ...It is important to note that these themes should not be viewed as simple and discrete components of the experience as a whole. The entire experience is much more complex than a mere list of categories. They

are identified and expanded upon only to gain a better understanding of the experience (Palmer, 2002, p. 82-83).

Theme 1: Value of Connections with Peers and Staff

It was kind of fun having counselors in the cabin because at night with our counselors we would talk with them sometimes. And one time they sat up reading to us until we all fell asleep, that was kind of cool. Also, when we, when the cabin got together and talked about how the people in our family, who we lost and stuff, it was kind of a connecting time, a bonding period. It was really fun because we all got to know each other. Yeah. (Miranda)

With these words, Miranda describes coming together with peers to share the experience of grief with a supportive staff team. All of the interviews drew attention to the enjoyment and value of connection with others at camp: connections with peers who had experienced the death of a family member, and connections with staff in various roles.

Peer Connections/Shared Experience

The enjoyment and satisfaction derived from coming together with a group of boys and girls, all of whom have a shared experience of loss, was referred to throughout the

interviews. The following excerpts reflect camper's perceptions about this:

I like camp because I can go there and know that the people around me have lost someone, too, and I really liked it this year because I got closer to Andi. She really missed her dad this year. And I just liked being someone that you can lean on. Camper Jeanette

You have the same thing in common: Someone in your family died so you can make friends easier. Camper Pippen.

Just knowing that you are not all by yourself in that situation, that other people are there, too. You feel more secure about not being left alone in the world. Camper Jackie.

The campers described value both in structured gatherings that focused on group cohesion and in informal, or spontaneous connection through friendships formed during the camp experience. The fact that the children had a shared loss history was recognized as a factor which fostered cohesion.

Campers shared stories of joining together in laughter, mischievousness or rowdiness, camp activities, silence, and exploration. When asked about a favorite part of camp, camper George responded, "When J.J., Randy, and I sat on the log and just talked. We would just sit there. It was my favorite part. It was fun."

The challenges of being in a group setting did not escape the interviewees. One camper, Jackie, alluded to different children being in different spaces energy-wise in congregational settings, "During fire time, it seemed like some of the kids were kind of distracted sometimes because there is a lot of kids. But other nights, just some nights they were, other nights it didn't seem quite as bad."

Camper George reflected a similar situation,

Axil would talk and he is always talking constantly and then he would talk at night and make a lot of noise and kick the wall and stuff... At night we were like, "Axil, remember, don't talk" and he goes, "O.K." Then when everyone was about to go to sleep he started making all the noises again. After we fell asleep we didn't hear anything.

These examples were brought up in response to what children did not like or would like to see changed about camp. The benefits of being immersed in a group and the

connections which emerged from the experience were not without challenges.

Parent responses supported the importance of shared experience for the campers. For their children to have the experience of spending time with and connecting with other grieving children was a major hope parents had for their children at camp.

I wanted them to know that they weren't alone. (Parent Jennifer)

It seemed like it was like, no matter what, it was going to be a good experience. She would be with other kids who have experienced loss and that is, no matter what else is going on, that is the bottom line. There is really no other forum that I know of in society for that. (Parent Ann)

There are other kids there and they are your age and it has happened to them. You are not the only one. Going to O'ki'suya, seeing that interaction, hearing about that interaction, being in it helped me, too. (Parent Gerald)

Just the hope that she would understand that she is not the only one in that situation, that there are other kids out there who have the same feelings and the same problems and get upset like she does and that

she is not the only one, so there are some other people out there. Because I know I think she felt that way sometimes. Right after, she was only four, so, but still, going to school and saying things like, "my brother died" and people would say, "oh yeah, sure." You know, give her a hard time. I think that upset her and then she felt like, you know, she was maybe the only one and now she knows she is not. Other kids feel the same way she does and that makes her feel a little better. (Parent Dori)

Staff Relations

It was really fun to have all the counselors to talk to if I was sad or something and they would always be there. And to have a nice counselor to joke around to and be funny - that was the nice part about counselors. They would be funny in the day but at night if you were loud they would be strict and stuff.

This statement, so clearly articulated by Camper George, captures the diversity of roles embraced by camp staff. Campers directly credited staff availability for a multitude of roles. Campers valued counselors' availability to offer support and create a safe, positive environment. Camper Jeanette remarked, "If you feel sad, there is always a counselor that you can sit with, there usually always is

because there is lots of them." Camper Miranda echoed this sentiment, "It kind of made me feel better and sometimes if I wasn't feeling too good I would just sit in the cabin and talk to someone about it." In his words, Camper George explained, "If you need to talk you can always go talk to one of the counselors."

I liked how they even if they weren't your counselor, they got to know you and they would all come up to you and be like "Hi, my name is so and so. Good to see you and that you came." And they welcomed you there and they were all really friendly about it. I thought it was good because sometimes you would get tired of your cabin counselors and because there was other people there you could just go off and be like, "O.K. I'm tired of these guys. I want to go talk to someone new." And there was always someone else there to talk to, who is willing to talk to you. (Camper Miranda)

Camper Andrea underlined the importance of having opportunities to talk without pressure, or group activities without an over-emphasis on talking. In her words, "I really think that's what makes camp fun is that they don't make you say anything and they don't make you talk all the time. You get to do other things, too. You don't stick with one thing like your parents dying, but if you need to talk,

you can talk to somebody. You can also exchange stories at camp."

In addition to the role of support figure, campers noted the value of having counselors play with them. Camper Brett delightedly explained, "Last year we got to throw our counselor in the water. Then the year before we tried getting Pele [counselor] in but we couldn't and he ended up pushing at least four or five of us in." Comments along the same line included: "It is helpful that we have counselors that will do the stuff with you" (Camper Jeanette); and "I really like him [the cook] because he interacts with us" (Camper Andrea).

An additional expectation of staff held by the campers was to enforce some structure and create an environment which felt safe. Camper Jeanette shared an experience with counselors:

Sometimes they could be a little mean but then again that was because we got in trouble for being too loud one night.... Not really mean. But mean by telling you what to do.... Yeah, we thought he was kind of mean after that but he is actually nice and funny.

Camper George expressed satisfaction with his exchange with a counselor regarding an altercation with a peer at camp:

They talked to me and told me I shouldn't and what to do if it ever happens again. I think it was Lee [counselor name] who was really nice. He talked to me and they said what I should or shouldn't do if it ever happens again.

Overall, it seems a message of comfort and care from the counselors is appreciated by campers. The appreciation for reading, playing, talking and looking after the campers extended to appreciation for the stuffed animals on the beds when they arrived and for the meals. Camper Annie clearly expressed feeling surrounded with love amidst her grief:

You have to go on with your life and just because one balloon popped, the rest don't have to. They will always be with you and you can always say they are not totally gone, that they are still with you. They are in your heart and it is just really good,. It was just really wonderful how you guys were so caring and so loving and stuff. It was just really great.

In line with their children's sentiments, parents spoke at length about the importance of staff relations and staff competencies. Annie's mother, Carli, clearly stated the value she places on a competent staff team in a therapeutic camp setting:

I think had that cabin been filled with just the student who lovingly volunteered time, that would have been fine, but it would have been a far different experience for Annie.

Gerald, Gwen and Brett's father, reflected differences Gwen described between A Camp to Remember staff and staff at Girl Scout Camp:

Girl Scout Camp was something to do - the counselors were so much less, I got the impression from hearing her [Gwen] talk that the counselors were at their own camp, like "you guys go play your games and be quiet and stay away and go have squirt gun fights and a good time." Your camp was a world of difference. ...

I think the staff did very well. They [Brett and Gwen] talk very highly of staff and counselors and of the cook.

Parent interviews provided validation of child sentiments about the importance of staff emotional availability and competence in providing a safe, enjoyable setting for bereavement camp. Parent Ann's comments linked the enjoyment that arose from opportunities to play within an emotionally supportive environment; "She seemed to enjoy herself.... They get to play as well as being emotionally supported." Interactions with staff helped create a feeling

of safety, of acceptance, and of making the children feel special. Children and parents reflected on the value of good food, stuffed animals on the bed, and of the availability of someone with whom to talk. Interactions were playful and supportive.

The balance between play and support, or perhaps the permission to free oneself up to be playful because of the climate of acceptance and support was a strong theme for parents and children alike.

The counselors were great, too. Don't let that fall by the wayside. That was very important. It was nice for me to know that they knew a few people there. That was comforting to walk away. But after picking them up and seeing how great they were welcomed and I think that is important for a kid. To know that they are accepted and know that things will be okay. (Parent Jennifer)

The data folder containing units of analysis relating to the value of connections with peers and staff at camp was the thickest folder. The theme of universality and feeling supported and understood was consistent throughout the interviews.

Well, it is kind of like the whole camp is a family for the days we spend together and that we help each other, like doing the dishes and learning new things.

Especially in the cabin you meet new friends or you see the same friends you saw last year and it is really fun. (Camper Jeanette)

Theme 2: Opportunities for Remembering or Commemorating

The importance of individual freedom and choice within a shared group experience was equally prevalent in the discussions about the power and importance of commemorative activities at camp. Campers seemed to find great value in the opportunities to honor and remember deceased family members in creative activities, discussions, and rituals.

Creative expression activities

In the interviews, campers talked about creating art work, quilt squares, and natural shrines along a memory trail. Camper Miranda described spending time drawing with friends, creating "pictures for my dad, that's one of the things I remember drawing. Sometimes we would just do our handprints or little fun things like that." Miranda alludes to freedom to create personal pieces with her deceased father in mind as well as to enjoy drawing "little fun things"; enjoyable doodles. Camper Jeanette described contributions campers created for a group quilt:

The quilt squares are in memory of the person you lost, sometimes people like to make one like, "John was here '99." Then other times it really means

something to someone - like mine this year. This is also a time to share stuff, to get to know someone.

Jeanette makes reference to the freedom to create a commemorative square, or offer a personal statement to the group quilt. Again the freedom for individual expression without pressure to focus solely on memories and commemoration arises.

In our interview, Camper Brittany described her experience with a Memory Trail:

B: We picked out some stuff, like a pine cone or a weird shape piece of bark or something and we put it somewhere where it was a cool spot and that felt good because my dad always liked the water and I put it right by the water.

T: So you picked out something special and put it right by the water because your dad liked water. What was it that you picked out?

Brittany: I picked out this thing that was bark and it was a weird shaped curvy thing. And it kind of looked like a person so I put it by the water.

Creative expression took many forms; quilt squares, art work, memory books, natural creations, and music. Camper Miranda shared a song which she wrote following her father's death and sang at camp fire:

Wake up my dad, Wake up I say

You can't lay around, and sleep all day.

I'm sorry she says, Mom looks in my eyes.

He's not waking up, So say your good-byes.

As they wheel you away in a long stretcher bed,

I think to myself, "How could you be dead?"

Together we laughed, but now I just cry.

You were my hero, and heroes don't die.

We loved you a lot, and I hope that you know

How much that we cared, and all that we'd do.

You made my friends laugh out loud,

And although I never told you so, it made me very
proud.

You had a quiet laugh, and a toothless grin.

But if you knew what I would give to see it all again.

Memory Boats

Each camper was asked what parts of bereavement camp were helpful. Many of the responses referenced the Memory Boat activity. Following is an excerpt from my interview with Camper Jackie:

J: Just putting what you feel on the boat and letting it out into the lake.

T: What was your process of making the boats?

J: We all went together out into the forest. We found a trail and we went out and looked for pieces of wood together and we just got thread and leaves and stuff and all together just did it. Sitting down by the lake with our cabin.

T: And then?

J: We would go with someone, a partner, and walk to the end of the dock and light a candle and let our boats go into the water.

T: How did you feel when you did this?

J: I felt really good doing it. There were a lot of feelings that came up for me. Just kind of relief and stuff.

Camper Jackie's description embraces a journey into the forest with her cabin mates; a search for natural

treasures; movement and stillness; togetherness; and emotional release. The significance of the memory boat ritual was also brought up by other campers:

T: Are there ways that a camp can help kids?

Pippen: The dream boats and the memory trail.

T: You said it's fun and you talked about a lot of the fun parts of camp and you said it was helpful. What do you think was helpful about camp for you?

Brittany: The memory boats.

Tina: Tell me about the memory boats.

Brittany: We got a piece of wood and we put things in memory of the person who died on it and we let them go and we lit a candle from the other candle before yours.

Miranda clearly illuminated her experience with the memory boat ritual. Following is an excerpt from her interview:

T: What kinds of things at camp did you enjoy the most?

M: I don't know, it was, I don't have a most. It was all really good, a good experience for me. I really liked the memory boats.

T: Tell me about the memory boats or your experience with the memory boats.

M: Well, you like make, you take bark and you put little naturalistic things on it that remind you of your dad or whoever you've lost or what you want to work towards and goals you have. It was a great experience, it felt like I was letting go a little bit more....

I really liked both parts; letting it go and watching it go and also making it because they both have significant parts like putting together made me remember everything and letting it go made me, made me feel really peaceful, something that I was doing for him.

T: Wow. Do you want to describe or create a scenario of how you let the boats go?

M: Well, we went on the dock. We all had our boats with us and the people that were going to let them go for all the way just let them go. We got on the dock and when they got up to the wobbly dock they would light a candle and then they would go let it go. People were crying everywhere and it was kind of sad. But you know, it was good to cry because you get your feelings out. And the people that didn't want to let

it go forever, their creations, they would tie a string to it and then let it go and pull it back in later.

One camper, Pippen, described memory boats as his least favorite activity. Further inquiry revealed that he may be using "least favorite" and "hardest" interchangeably. Following is the discussion we had after identifying memory boats as a least favorite part of camp:

T: What was it about the memory boats?

J: Because everyone cried and it just made me sad.

T: Can you think of another way, you said earlier that you knew you could opt out but you really liked making the memory boats and you put all this work into this huge Titanic that you made. Can you think of a way that it could be made more comfortable or could be done differently that would be better for you?

J: No

T: Would you recommend that it be skipped?

J: No.

T: It is your least favorite part of camp but you wouldn't recommend that it be skipped?

J: Yeah.

T: Tell me about that.

J: I don't know. I like making it and setting it off and lighting the candles. And watching them get sunk by the wave runners.

It is notable that the same camper, when interviewed in 1998, shared the following story:

It's about the boats. I got this tiger on my bed named Hobbes. His mommy died, too. So I made a candle for Hobbes' Mommy and I sailed it out and it was the last one that was burning still... I still have Hobbes. He is sitting in my room.

Parents of campers also brought up the value of commemorative opportunities at camp. Dori, Jeanette's mother, offered her perceptions:

I think the things that you all have done so far have worked real well. I think that trail that they had, they took me up the trail and showed me where they left things along the trail this last year. And the pictures that they made and what they wrote. Annalea wrote to her mom and Jeanette wrote to her brother. I mean that is something that I think they need. It gets some of the stuff out that they save up through the years. They want to say something and they don't know how to say it. Drawing pictures and leaving them, or

the boats that they built and sent out into the water
- they really like those.

Parent Rose's remarks regarding commemorative activities or times of remembering deceased loved one's at camp also brought attention to the role experiential activities play for someone when words are hard to come by:

With camp, I think the walk is a good one and the memory boats are great because it is kind of a non-threatening thing, you know, it is not like let's sit and have an intense chat. I think especially with kids that young they don't know what to say - even "I miss my Dad" or whatever. I mean they can't really say.

Even at my age I can't always say why I'm in awe about something.

Parent Ann's comments illustrated the added significance of a publicly accessible nature-based commemoration for a child or family without a burial spot or gravestone.

It is giving honor to the people or the person that we loved and the relationship that we had. As far as I'm concerned, it is a way of affirming that it is still a memory. A chance to create and challenge in a way, you come up with something natural, bark and leaves and stuff, and pine, to do something that reminds you of the person that is gone. [sigh and pause] Especially

important in our situation in a way I guess, the memory trail, because we weren't able to bury Reggie's body so we don't have a place on the earth that we can go to. I mean we have spots like camping and stuff. So in a way, it creates a Memory Spot.

Theme 3: Enjoyable Experiences

"The shaving cream fight, the girls raiding the boys cabins. The kids' horseplay is a very important part of the camp," explains parent Gerald. Parents and campers went to great length to emphasize the importance of camp being a positive experience, and to articulate what it was that made camp enjoyable.

What words do participants use to describe their camp experience? "It is fun." The interviews pointed to the importance and appeal of camp being an enjoyable experience.

"I would do everything the same, it was a lot of fun and I thought it was perfect." (Camper Brittany)

"It was fun." (Camper Pippen)

"It is a lot of fun." (camper Jackie)

"It was really fun." (Camper Miranda)

"It was pretty fun." (Camper George)

"It turned out to be a lot of fun." (Camper Jeanette)

"Fun... it is something fun to do" (Camper Andrea)

"It was just really fun" ("Camper Annie)

"It will be one of the funnest experiences you've, one of the best experiences" (Camper Brett)

The campers clearly perceived the camp as "fun," but variance was indicated on what made the experience enjoyable for different campers. Taking part in activities, supporting others, helping out, creating art and craft projects, being challenged, and even sleeping were discussed as appealing parts of camp.

"It's fun, and it is helpful and nice and you get to do a lot of fun stuff." (Camper Brittany)

"This year when Sandy [camper] was leaving, Donna [staff] got out her guitar and started playing a song for Sandy and we all sang. It was a lot of fun." (Camper Jackie)

"I did a lot of art work. It was really fun." (Camper Miranda)

"It is a camp that is the best camp that I will probably ever go to. You have to do chores but the chores are fun. Not bad chores. And it is just really fun. You get to eat a lot." (Camper Annie)

"One of the things I really liked is when we made the llama hair beads. I have always liked the secret pals thing. That is really fun." (Camper Jackie)

Satisfying experiences were not limited to activities and social events. Campers also brought in the value of less-structured time for interaction, the gift of understanding and feeling understood, and opportunities for contemplation and rest. Camper Annie shared, " Well, going to sleep was about the funnest thing because after all that fun and playing and stuff you finally get to just zonk out." Camper Jackie enjoyed the "quiet time when they read to us or something. I liked just hanging out." She spoke of the importance of time for "just thinking what you have done over the time you've been there."

The appeal of different aspects of camp to different campers ties in with the message of the importance of choice that the kids brought up in the interviews.

Camper Jackie explained, "You had so many choices you didn't have to do this or if you didn't really want to do this you could do something else." Camper Jeanette reiterated this sentiment, "You get to pick what you want to do. I liked that this year, that you got to pick."

Parents equally emphasized the importance of bereavement camp being a fun and enjoyable experience in their interviews. While valuing the support and

opportunities for self-expression, parents identified "fun" as a huge goal for the program.

My hope was... that the emphasis be sort of how to have fun. All of these kids there know how to mourn. They do it day in and day out. They've lived with it sometimes for years and the important thing is that they again learn that that doesn't stop you from having a life and enjoying things and that the person you lost would not want you to not have a wonderful camp experience. (Parent Rose)

Everyone gets so wrapped up with that it is important to cry and the anger and this and that, but they overlook the laughing. The fun. The spontaneity. Going on the carousel. And it is like you said, people will think like, "Well, you must be all better because you laughed," or "Are you crazy? All this just happened and you are having a good time," or something. But the important part is to have fun. Being with other kids in the same boat, that all have the same problems, can all laugh. It is going to be all right. (Parent Gerald)

I know they have fun when they are swimming and running around doing stuff with other kids. She didn't say much except that they had fun. (Parent Dori)

Theme 4: Natural Setting/Nature-based Activities

You get to trip in gopher holes, (laughter), you get to do camp fires. You can do a lot of stuff out there. I think for me was that it was incredible to see those huge moose and when we were just coming out of our cabin thinking everything was perfectly normal and there's a moose in front of us. Like whoa! (Camper Annie).

Throughout the interviews many references were made to fishing, swimming, hiking, sitting on logs, or moments at the camp fire. The awareness of the natural setting affecting the camper's experience came through in their responses to the interviews.

I think it made a difference for me because it was peaceful where we were. It was pretty and you could just go sit and be alone and be with the water or be with the trees or be with anything. You don't have to listen to cars going by or see buildings. If you look out the window and you see a big building, you know, that is not the kind of thing that I really look up

to. I don't really care for big buildings and streets.

(Camper Miranda)

The sensations of immersion in a natural setting came out many ways:

"We swam across the river and our bellies touched the river-weed and it just felt good" (Pippen)

"The night before that I saw a mountain lion out there. And it was scary and I was like, oh my gosh, what is this?" (Brittany)

"There was one time when we went behind all the cabins. There was a bird's nest and we looked up there and we thought it was three baby birds, but it was a baby and two big birds." (George)

"It is pretty surrounding. It has a lot of pretty trees and wild life.... I like being out in the wilderness, but not alone in the wilderness. I like being alone, but not at night. The cabins are also really pretty." (Andrea)

"The last night we had a fire. A big fire. Well, a big camp fire and it gave it more of a feeling and it was the night we gave Memory Boats so everyone was still a little upset but that feeling of warmth gave me warmth inside as well as out." (Camper Miranda)

The many accounts of taking in the outdoors reflect campers' experiences of amazement, warmth, fear, beauty, and peace at different times in the natural setting. The commemorative activities involving the memory trail and the memory boats were also outdoor activities emphasized by participants. Many of the units of analysis were double coded as appropriate to both categories: Opportunities for Remembering/Commemorating and Natural Setting/Nature-Based Activities.

Parent Interviews did not reference the value of nature or importance of a nature-based setting as distinctly. Parent Rose brought attention to the opportunity for metaphor, and the power of metaphor in the outdoors in her perceptions about the "Tippy-test," a canoe-skills exercise at camp:

I think that kind of thing is so impacts on kids.

"I did that hard thing" and I don't think there are degrees of pain, you are either in it or you are not, and to get to do something like that where it is, "ok, this is wet and cold, and it is fun, too." Yeah, I think that was a great one, That whole outdoor stuff - even the camp fire. He loved the camp fires at night.

In general, parents focused much more on the gift of the child having a break from the home environment and an opportunity to grieve away from parent influence:

"I think I kind of like the idea of camp being very separate from life, too. They so need a release and to be wild and free and away from all that heaviness because it's right back on them when they get home."

(Parent Carli)

"I think it is a huge advantage that they learn to grieve on their own, that they be allowed that. That they not be influenced by my moods or my, um, I just think that is one of the strongest points is that it is separate from the home and that they learn that they are going to have to learn to carry this weight on their own and learn how to do this. I mean we help them as much as we can but mentally Pippen will spend the rest of his life without a father and he's got to learn how to do that at all different ages. I'm not always going to be there when he hits rough times."

(Parent Rose)

"To be at camp, away from the usual household stresses of the memories and whatever, just to be able to have fun... It was almost like she was on a break from

emotions and I think that is an important part of the process." (Parent Gerald)

Theme 5: Freedom to Be

The campers' perception and value of the acceptability of bringing their authentic selves into the camp experience was articulated throughout the interviews. Numerous allusions were made to the freedom to express a range of emotions, discuss parts of their lives which they had not previously shared, and to enjoy themselves. Describing an experience with small groups, camper Jackie explained:

Well, afterwards, it is really relieving to get it all out and stuff, I felt a lot better afterwards because I could talk to people about anything I wanted and they would totally understand because they have been through the same thing. And it is a lot of fun.

This feeling of support, understanding, and shared experience seemed to underline this theme of the acceptability of emotional expression. Camper Miranda illuminated her experience:

There are so many happy times, it is so fun. You have so much fun. You sit and, there are times when you want to laugh the rest of the day and there are times when you want to do nothing but sit down and cry. There's so many different feelings. There are

times when everyone wants to be funny and hilarious and times when people want to be serious or times when people feel like laughing or just talking or being quiet and shy. And everyone is good with it. Everyone is fine with how you feel.... That's what helped me, just to know that I wasn't alone and there was gonna be people who were going to cry and I could cry if I wanted to and if I wanted to laugh I could laugh.

Other campers concurred with the acceptability of affective expression. Camper Jeanette remarked, "I can express my feelings about what happened and why it happened. It wasn't because of me, it was just because." Camper Brittany expressed the value of release, "It helps you get all your feelings out when you talk about it and it feels good to just get it all out."

Parents underlined this perception of camp as a "good place to really let those feelings out" (Parent Jennifer). Parent Ann added her thoughts:

[My daughter] told me about it [memory boats] first. That it was a tearful experience. I think there was only one person who didn't cry and I think that in a way is really more than I could have hoped for. That these children who are just spending three days together feel comfortable enough to cry in each

other's presence. So that's not something that is easy for her - to cry directly related to loss.

The perceived permission to express a range of emotion, share personal stories, and engage in authentic interactions was part of what set the camp experience apart from other experiences for participants. A Camp to Remember was viewed by informants to be a place where camper's could put masks and defenses aside and truly be themselves.

Archival Data: Exit Interviews 2000 and 2002

The summaries of the Exit Interviews conducted with 35 bereavement camp participants in 2000 and 43 participants in 2002 offered remarkably similar themes to the semi-structured interviews conducted as part of this project. "The community of camp" was strongly represented in the exit interviews of 2000 and 2002 according to the summaries. Common references were made to the value of "making new friends," and the "shared history of loss and the sense of comfort and belonging within that." The presence of supportive staff, the relationships with friends, and the feeling of safety and support within the camp community were themes articulated in the exit interviews which underline the major theme of **Value of Connections with Peers and Staff** represented in the semi-structured interviews.

Opportunities for Remembering or Commemorating was another theme emphasized in the Exit Interview Summaries. "Many indicated that they felt safe and supported within the camp experience to explore their grief through ritual, the sharing of their story or within the silent acceptance of all involved" (Exit Interview Summary, 2000). The 2002 Summary also noted that "Commemorative activities are often stated as significant parts of camp."

The majority of respondents described camp as "fun" or used a variation on that theme. Respondents generally focused on various, specific camp activities to illuminate the most enjoyable part of camp. This parallels the key informants' attention to the value of camp as an **Enjoyable Experience**. The Exit Interview Summary concluded,

While it is impossible to separate out the responses from the particular experience and setting they were exposed to, it is worth noting that the majority of comments that related to what was positive about camp for them had to do with activities rooted in immersion in the outdoors. Most often these were activities associated with being immersed in or on the lake (e.g., swimming, canoeing/kayaking. Some spoke of sitting around the fire ("I'll always remember when we

sat by the fire and sang") or the night on the dock under the stars.

This summary provides coherence with the theme of **Natural Setting** illuminated by the key informants and parents.

Freedom to Be came through in Exit Interview references to feeling supported, and the range of emotions expressed throughout the camp experience.

Overall, five themes were identified as a result of data analysis of the more intensive semi-structured interviews with the 10 key informants in this project: 1) Value of Connections with Peers and Staff; 2) Opportunities for Remembering or Commemorating; 3) Enjoyable Experiences; 4) Natural Setting/Nature-based Activities; and 5) Freedom to Be. These five themes were the same themes identified through compilation of responses to exit interviews conducted with the 35 camp participants in 2000 and the 43 participants in 2002. This provides coherence between depth (in-depth semi-structured interviews) and breadth (exit interviews representing all camp participants in 2000 and 2002) in this study.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Therapeutic Implications

Without the different, without the memory boats, camp fire each night, without it, it would be like pieces of camp but not the whole feeling of camp (Camper Miranda).

The semi-structured interviews with campers and parents, analysis of archival data, and observations in the camp setting provided an abundance of very personal and individualized information about bereavement camp. In this project, the focus was specifically on the following questions: (1) How can bereavement camp experiences be structured to support a child's bereavement process; and, (2) What aspects of the camp did participants experience as most helpful? Five distinct themes emerged from the constant comparative mode of data analysis: 1) Value of Connections with Peers and Staff; 2) Opportunities for Remembering or Commemorating; 3) Enjoyable Experiences; 4) Natural Setting/Nature-based Activities; and 5) Freedom to Be. The emphasis on these five themes which wove throughout the camper interviews, parent interviews, and exit interviews deserves attention. However, as the excerpt above explains, there is a risk that the essence of camp will be minimized when pulled apart into single activities, feeling experiences, or notable moments. With that in mind,

the five themes are presented singularly for the sake of articulation and discussion. The complexity of the existence of each theme within a larger context, as well as the overlaps and the interactive dance between the themes, is not ignored. Rather, the separate themes provide a structure for illuminating individual experiences and discussing therapeutic implications.

Value of Connections with Peers and Staff

Camper interviews, parent remarks, summaries of dozens of exit interviews with over seventy campers, and observations all pointed to the significance of joining together with other human beings; allowing oneself to touch and be touched by another. Campers fondly recounted playing together, sharing stories, engaging in games, and just "hanging out" with one another. The power of connection deserves attention. What is it about feeling connected with another that is remarkable?

The multitude of comments and varied descriptions shine light on the value campers place on shared experiences with others. Some alluded to sneaking about camp; others shared special activities filled with laughter, challenge, and/or just plain fun; still others brought up the value of being surrounded by a group of peers, all of whom are also grieving, and the gift that

comes from feeling accepted and understood. Perhaps all of these forms of connection or joining in togetherness could be attended to as separate themes (e.g., Sneaking around at camp/Mischievousness; Sharing Activities with Friends; Talking with Peers; Universality of Grief). In this project, it seems difficult to pull the relationship-oriented themes apart: The overriding theme of the power, value, and joy which arises from connection umbrellas the subthemes. For this reason I chose to unite them under one theme: Value of Connections with Peers and Staff.

The importance of cohesion in group settings has been emphasized by researchers and authors in mental health (Corey & Corey, 1992; Yalom, 1995). The camp setting is certainly no exception, and perhaps even an ideal environment to foster feelings of togetherness and shared experience with bereaved children. Children's groups and bereavement groups consistently focus on building bonds between participants and helping members come together (Mulcahey & Young, 1995; Sommers-Flanagan et al., 2000). The bereavement camp functions as an alternative group modality for children, supporting grief and individual growth within an emotionally and physically safe peer environment. The influence of immersion in the group setting (and simultaneous removal from each individual's

normal environment) around the clock for multiple days deserves consideration. Irvin Yalom (1995, 2002), accomplished group psychotherapist and author, has drawn attention to the value of client-to-client interactions in multi-hour T-groups. He brought attention to the T-group, or encounter group, as a setting for self-discovery for normals, or individuals considered to be successful by their peers. The T-group, like the camp setting, provided a respite from daily routine and stresses, encouraged interpersonal honesty, and assuaged participants' deep sense of isolation (1995). In interviews, many campers shared similar ideas regarding the gift of being away from home for a few days, of feeling free to express a range of emotions, and of the amazing sensation of being surrounded with other young people who understand.

The responses indicated what a pervasive theme connection is for grieving children. This theme also arose in the stories of bereaved children compiled by Krementz (1988) and Simon and Drantell (1998). A woman describing her experience as a fifth-grader returning to school after the death of her mother explained:

I remember the class walking on eggshells around me for what seemed like a long time. There was a lot of whispering behind my back because I was this oddity. I

was this child who didn't have a mother (Simon & Drantell, 1998).

This feeling of being different or "an oddity" is reduced in the bereavement camp setting where every child has had a family member die. Campers referred to "friendships" created in the camp context which endured beyond the four- or five-day program, lasting in some cases multiple years. Parent Rose summarized the value of connections well as she described her son's experience at camp:

Just overwhelmingly positive. He bonded really positively with the kids, I think because they had something in common even though they were completely different kids. If he would have met them at school, there would have been no connection, but they had that at camp. We are all here, we're doing the same work kind of focus, and I think it was a really good experience. And also one that he got to bond with kids who did have that difference. We just don't know a lot of young kids, who, it's fairly unusual, you know a lot of divorced single mothers but you don't know a lot of widowed single mothers, I don't anyway and for Pippen, it made him feel not so different but special.

It is a subtle distinction - but a really important one.

The value of connection was not limited to peer cohesion. The importance of the multitude of roles staff assume in outdoor-based, therapeutic settings was supported by this current project. Children from A Camp to Remember emphasized their appreciation for staff being available to talk or to offer support at any time. They alluded to a delicate balance between leaders being available with finely tuned skills to interact with them about death and grief, or to support a wide range of affective expression, and yet not pressuring disclosure or focusing solely on bereavement. Equally important was the willingness of bereavement camp staff to engage in play and get their feet wet, interacting with campers. Numerous references were made to shared experiences with staff; swimming, hiking, playing, joining in silent reflection on the seemingly sacred log, or getting thrown in the lake.

The roles of staff at bereavement camp encompass all of the necessary skills of any summer camp staff: supervisory and leadership skills; the ability to lead and engage in a variety of camp activities; and care and compassion for children. In addition, therapeutic camp staff must be able to support children experiencing varying

degrees of emotional distress and display other "soft skills" of outdoor leadership more often associated with traditional counseling (Phipps and Swiderski, 1990).

Parents of A Camp to Remember campers spoke at length about the value of a competent staff team. Parent Carli clarified that:

Any camp that I would want my daughters to go to that dealt with them on such an emotional way or more deeply than just a 'go-play-have-fun' sort of camp, I think . . . a large, loving, well-trained staff is number one as far as I am concerned.

The emphasis on training and support is not to minimize the value of a staff team that is ready to play and have fun. As stated previously, the permission for the children to play was equally as important as the permission to grieve. Perhaps more relevant is the staff's awareness that children make sense of their world and integrate experiences into their lives through play and spontaneous interaction (Wolfelt, 1996). Grief and play cannot be separated. Parent Gerald alluded to cultural pressure for bereaved individuals to behave solemnly:

People will think, "Well, you must be all better because you laughed," or "Are you crazy? All this just happened and you are having a good time," or

something. But the important part is to have fun.

Being with other kids in the same boat, that all have the same problems, can all laugh. It is going to be all right.

This excerpt seems to convey a permission to open up and express positive emotion that arises from the feeling of acceptance and understanding that develops within a group of bereaved children. It is impossible to know at this point how much of the joy and playfulness is connected to the satisfaction arising from a feeling of universality.

Related to staff competency is staff's willingness and ability to bear witness to, hold, and emotionally contain an enormous range of feelings, discussion, and energy associated with loss and death. The children participating in a bereavement camp come bearing very personal and often very tragic stories. Staff may be exposed to tales of children surviving an accident which claimed the life of a parent; mysterious endings; acts of indescribable violence by one parent to another; heart-wrenching family choices regarding continuing life support for an ailing young child, held in the arms of a sibling; and of precious, and sometimes painful, final breaths.

In Jill Krementz's (1988) book, How it Feels When a Parent Dies, youth share their stories:

I remember the day my mom died very clearly... Timmy told me what had happened. He'd gone out for a walk with Mom and there had been two taxi cabs that crashed into each other. One swiveled around and hit Mom and she hit her head - she was thrown up into the air against a mailbox (p. 23).

I was six when my mother died. She jumped out the window from the ninth floor... (p. 85).

My father died of cancer when I was eight years old. He was in and out of the hospital a lot and he was having a lot of drugs and treatments (p. 77).

I include these excerpts to illuminate the very personal and emotionally evocative experiences that bereaved children may share. It is hard to imagine a compassionate person not being deeply moved by these experiences. Death is a difficult and often taboo subject that affects adult leaders and facilitators as well as the children being served. Every human being experiences loss, and eventually, death and grief. The inevitability of the impact that immersion in discussion, emotional catharsis, or commemorative activity will have on both leader and child draws attention to the importance of staff exploring and

discussing our personal history and biases relating to childhood losses, death, and grief prior to and throughout our work with bereaved children (Webb, 1993; Wolfelt, 1996). The goal is not to be untouched by the experiences of the children in the program, but rather to be in a personal psychological space that allows for a child's pain, confusion, or anger to pass through the adult caregiver without becoming lodged within him/her. The leader serves as a companion to the child (Wolfelt, 1996). Both child and adult walk away from the exchange having connected, perhaps being deeply touched, but with very different roles and experiences. The exchange is genuine and heart-felt, with the adult as the responsible agent, establishing and maintaining boundaries which allow the child to express his/her individual experience with gentle support and without pressure. Ultimately, the children receive permission to journey with their grief through dialogue, play, emotional catharsis or silence, without needing to take care of the adult.

*Kid's needs are best met by grown-ups whose
needs are met (Mitten, 1995, p. 82).*

Opportunities for Remembering or Commemorating

*While the sorrow of death and loss is never finished,
neither do we ever exhaust our sources of energy and*

of new images of renewal in our storehouse of memory. Children preserve their important relationships with dead family members in memory and spirit. These evolving relationships can be revisited and restored as sources of comfort and havens of safety throughout life (Shapiro, 1994, p.122).

The campers provided overwhelming support for having opportunities to remember or commemorate deceased family members at camp. Children described a variety of activities or rituals which they often personalized and found meaningful. Many children openly discussed the power of the memory boat ceremony. Other references to special commemorative activities included art projects, the memory trail, creating quilt squares, or writing poetry or songs. Different aspects of various events or activities appealed to different campers. Some focused on their process of creating something significant. Camper Brittany shared how she personalized the memory trail:

...that felt good because my dad always liked the water and I put it right by the water. ...I picked out this thing that was bark and it was a weird shaped curvy thing. And it kind of looked like a person so I put it by the water.

Many campers described the group coming together and sharing an activity or ritual. Camper Jackie emphasized the collective experience in her cabin's process of creating memory boats:

We all went together out into the forest. We found a trail and we went out and looked for pieces of wood together and we got thread and leaves and stuff and all together, just did it, sitting down by the lake with our cabin. ...

We would go with someone, a partner, and walk to the end of the dock and light a candle and let our boats go into the water...

She added a bit about her personal response within the collective experience:

I felt really good doing it. There were a lot of feelings that came up for me. Just kind of relief and stuff.

Other responses emphasized the importance of having opportunities, without feeling pressured, to talk or create something in particular. Camper Jeanette expressed the acceptability of creating individualized quilt squares, "Sometimes people like to make one like, 'John was here, '99.' Then other times it really means something to someone - like mine this year."

Campers captured the value of different parts of the process of commemorative activities. In her description of the memory boats, Camper Miranda shared:

I really liked both parts; letting it go and watching it go and also making it because they both have significant parts like putting together made me remember everything and letting it go made me, made me feel really peaceful - something I was doing for him.

The opportunity to remember and honor deceased loved ones through experiential activity and ritual is an integral part of supporting bereaved children (Fitzgerald, 1992; Hilliard, 2001; Mulcahey & Young, 1995; Wolfelt, 1996). Following is a reading used by Alan Wolfelt (1996) in a memory ritual:

In the rising of the sun and in its going down,
we remember them.

In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter,
we remember them.

In the warmth of the sun and the peace of summer,
we remember them.

In the rustling of the leaves and the beauty of
autumn,
we remember them.

In the beginning of the year and when it ends,

we remember them.

When we are weary and in need of strength,

we remember them.

When we are lost and sick at heart,

we remember them.

When we have joys we yearn to share,

we remember them.

So long as we live, they too shall live,

for they are now a part of us,

As we remember them (p. 194-195).

At A Camp to Remember, I hesitate to use "memory" in isolation, because many children in the camp program are grieving the death of a parent or sibling from when the camper was an infant or before conscious memory, or dealing with the death of a parent with whom they had little or no contact; hence, few memories. Memory activities can also be referred to as "treasure" activities; an opportunity to honor the loss they have experienced with significant items or treasures.

One of the major tasks of bereaved children involves accepting the reality of the death (Wolfelt, 1996; Worden, 1996). Following the death of a family member, participation in rituals may help a child understand and ultimately accept the finality of the loss (Wolfelt, 1996).

Children who have not been involved in funerals, memorials, or other commemorative rituals may have more difficulty acknowledging the reality of the death. With adequate preparation and support, children often choose to be a part of a ritual in some way. Helen Fitzgerald, the director of the nation's first community health center-based grief program, remarked, "Children love ritual and ceremony" (p.47). The comments elicited from the interviews in this project provide enormous support for her remark.

When specifically asked how a camp could be helpful for children following the death of a family member, responses included:

"Maybe you can learn that you don't want to throw away pictures of the people that you lost. You want to keep them and you might want to use them in a memory book or something. It is really fun" (Camper Jeanette).

"The memory boats... The memory trail" (Camper Brittany).

The exit interviews with all of the camp participants further underscored the value of opportunities for remembering and commemorating deceased family members. When asked, "What do you think is most helpful for kids who have survived the death of a family member," over half of

the 35 campers in 2000 included a reference to a commemorative activity in their response. These campers specified the memory boat and memory trail rituals, small groups referred to as A Time of Remembering, and remembering and sharing stories throughout camp as helpful aspects of the camp experience.

Children deserve to be prepared for and supported during rituals. A discussion can be guided by a child's natural curiosity, incorporating specific details of what to expect. The meaning of the ritual is important to clarify, ideally integrating how the child finds meaning into the ritual. With funerals, memorial services, commemorative gatherings, and later memory activities, children generally respond to opportunities not just to attend, but to take part in creating, adding to, or personalizing the ritual in some way if appropriate. Children are supported through rituals by being gently embraced in the companionship of caring adults.

The groups at camp include both structured and unstructured gatherings of young people. As in any therapeutic setting, the limits of confidentiality must be clarified. Confidentiality in group settings is complicated by the impossibility of guaranteeing that other group members will not reveal information beyond the circle of

confidence. Camper Andrea expressed the challenge of not revealing the stories of fellow campers:

I think the kids maybe don't want to say things in front of the other kids because not being able, you might not trust all kids to tell anyone else. It may be hard not to tell anyone else because there is kind of an exciting story behind the kid's parents or relatives who died.

Confidentiality can be encouraged by having participants jointly agree upon what ground rules would be helpful and giving the group an opportunity to explore reasons that confidentiality is important in this context.

Enjoyable Experiences

Many of the enjoyable experiences identified in this project may parallel what appeals to children about any camp: hanging out with friends, middle of the night outings, waterfront activities, and arts and crafts. These activities and escapades are not unique to this program. The interaction between these enjoyable activities and the tasks of grieving children, and how enjoyable experiences co-mingle with the other dominant themes is explored next.

The delight experienced by campers, even as they relayed favorite activities and treasured moments, clarified the importance of therapeutic programs being

appealing to participants. Yalom (1995) pointed out that participant self-report of therapy outcome is positively correlated with attraction to the group. The appeal of a fun, enjoyable camp experience was consistent throughout camper and parent interviews and exit interview summaries. Alan Wolfelt (1996) shared this suggestion for leaders of support groups for bereaved children:

I urge you to be creative.... While this is serious stuff, always remember that it should be fun; you are companioning children who want to play, laugh, and have fun, even in the midst of grief (p. 240).

Children described a wide range of activities they enjoyed at camp. Many campers focused on physical activity or group challenges. Brittany explained, "I did swimming and challenge games and the hike, those were fun, too." Treasured activities included fishing, canoeing, swimming, and various water activities. These accounts relayed experiences of relaxation and calmness (e.g., "I swam and sometimes I just floated."; "It is just so fun, like after a hot day when you are tired, it is nice to get in the cold water and hang out."), as well as moments of physical exertion and enthusiasm ("It is fun when the counselors go swimming. People get thrown off the dock and then they come

back and pull the counselors off the dock and everyone gets wet.").

Other memorable or favorite moments at camp included unstructured time spent with friends. Camper Pippen expressed his enjoyment, "when J.J., Randy, and I sat on the log and just talked. We would just sit there. It was my favorite part. It was fun." This excerpt also provides evidence of the interconnectedness of the themes. Pippen's response can be coded in multiple categories including: 1) Connection with Peers ("J.J., Randy and I sat on the log and just talked"); 2) Natural Setting ("[we] sat on the log"); and 3) Enjoyable Experiences ("It was my favorite part. It was fun"). All of the other themes (Connection with Peers and Staff, Natural Setting/Nature-based Activities, Opportunities to Remember/Commemorate, and Freedom to Be) embrace pieces of what different campers find enjoyable about the bereavement camp.

Some of the enjoyable time with friends was sharing mischievous escapades:

What was really funny though, that night we were really hyper and rowdy and we made up the story that we had to go to the bathroom, because we wanted to get out of the cabin at night... So we ran and screamed all

the way to the bathroom.... That was funny (Camper Mandy).

New bonds and increased cohesion seem to arise from the shared experience of plotting, sneaking, and adventuring at camp.

Campers also described positive experiences with creative expression.

"One of the things I really liked is when we made the llama hair beads" (Camper Jackie).

"I liked the art workshop and the beading and weaving" (Camper Jeanette).

Non-verbal opportunities for self-expression are commonly cited as valuable outlets for grieving children (Hilliard, 2001; Wolfelt, 1996). As children engage with the task of "expressing a range of emotion relating to the grief", creative expression provides a constructive outlet for that emotion. Music, arts, poetry, and dance can be valuable instruments in the process of integrating profound losses into children's lives and into their evolving self-identities.

A discussion of what constitutes an "enjoyable experience" at camp would not be complete without addressing what campers found unappealing or not enjoyable at bereavement camp. When asked what they did not like at

camp, respondents most often referenced a specific activity ("swimming because the water is cold", "the shaving cream fight"); a site complaint (e.g., "squeaky beds", "leachy water"); or had difficulty identifying something. The specific activity complaints were sometimes contradicted in the same interview:

T: What did you enjoy least about camp?

Mandy: Boys....

[Later in interview]

T: Would you prefer more separation between boys and girls at camp?

Mandy: No, cause they are kind of fun to tease. I don't want all girls at camp. I like boys, and I hate boys.

T: Say again what you enjoyed the least about camp.

Pippen: The memory boats...

[Later in interview]

T: Would you recommend that it [memory boats] be skipped?

Pippen: No.

Although both campers quickly and clearly responded with something about camp they did not like in response to a question, neither wanted it to be changed. This leads to

the question posed earlier about whether something is disliked or rather, difficult. Pippen was asked about "enjoyable" activities. The memory boat ritual was not full of joy, and in fact was, in general, described as a time of connection, remembering, and shared sadness. Finding the activity to be "least enjoyable" is very likely semantically in agreement with peers. It was difficult, powerful and special. Another consideration is that these children have faced difficult life events, and perhaps hold a unique view of their ability to endure challenges. Simply because something is difficult does not imply the need to avoid it.

Overall, while most children identified swimming as a highlight at camp, at least one commented that she did not like to swim; and while the shaving cream fight was a hit with some campers, it was a negative experience for another. This again underlines the value of choices in the camp setting. When someone chooses to participate in something, his/her investment is different than a participant in a mandatory activity. As with other therapeutic groups, it is important for participants to have the right to decline an activity or choose to pass on a particular part of the activity.

Natural Setting/Nature-based Activities

Talk counseling alone with bereaved children does not help them reconcile death loss into their young lives. It doesn't create a wellspring of hope for healing and a sense of belonging in the world. It doesn't heal the wound of grief that comes with the death of someone loved.

Yet something even simpler than talk counseling often has these desired effects: experiencing nature (Wolfelt, 1996, p. 190).

The four other thematic categories have great potential to transfer to indoor or city-based grief support programs. The "Value of Connection with Peers and Staff", "Opportunities for Remembering or Commemoration", "Enjoyable Experiences", and "Freedom to Be" are not necessarily dependent on immersion in a natural setting. Group cohesion, experiential activities, memorial rituals, and fun are likely a valued part of many bereavement programs regardless of setting. An important consideration in this study, is how the outdoor setting interacts with the other categories to foster or enhance relationships, feelings of enjoyment, commemorative activities, and the freedom to be oneself; and secondly, what the natural

setting offers or facilitates that is unique from a city-based or room-based program.

Because A Camp to Remember is based in an outdoor setting, inevitably references to nature-based activities and being outside arose. My interest in this category was much more related to what a child's experience was in the outdoors; how did the natural setting influence the support experience, if at all?

The interview responses and exit summaries indicated a positive influence of the natural landscape. References were made to a feeling of tranquility in the space (e.g., "It was peaceful where we were."); the beauty of the area (e.g., "It is pretty surrounding. It has a lot of pretty trees and wild life."); a less populated area (e.g., "**It is important to be out?**", "Yeah, out in a lake where there are only a couple of kids instead of a bunch of kids."); and the awesomeness of wild animals:

Well seeing all those animals there, I had never seen a real gopher, I had never seen a real moose, and I was this far away from that moose and I'm like, "Uh ooh, it's a big one."... Our cabin isn't all that far away from the forest and it's like ooh, I wonder. All those animals out there. It was so cool (Camper Annie).

Camper comments reflect an awareness of the varied sensations they experience in the natural world, feelings of calm and tranquility, and moments of contemplation and reflection. These parallel the therapeutic benefits identified in adventure therapy literature (Miles, 1993). These compliment the benefits of the other categories including enhanced group cohesion; fun, new, challenging experiences; and the power of commemorative activities in natural settings.

Adventure therapy literature emphasizes the therapeutic use of metaphor in experience and process in outdoor-based programs (Arnold, 1994; Gass, 1991).

It is this dualistic quality of wilderness that Outward Bound emphasizes: the wilderness may be filled with hardship and suffering but it offers refuge and transformation as well. Thus, the wilderness is a consciously used metaphor for life within the Outward Bound experience (Arnold, 1994, p. 52).

Metaphors for life and ways of approaching life abound in natural settings. Evident are the life cycles of living plants and animals and various life forms in different stages of the life cycle; examples of the resiliency of living things even amidst adverse conditions and severe trials; and different ways of coping, adapting, and

persevering. Some metaphors arise naturally; watching an ant carry an enormous load, perhaps with the assistance of another, or marveling at a flower blooming in seemingly harsh terrain with little room to root. Other metaphors arise from ways individuals or groups respond to natural challenges or more structured activities. In the bereavement camp setting, one camper described a favorite activity:

I like to do the tippy-tests. You go out with someone... then you flip over and you get under the canoe and pick it up and then have to flip it over again and climb back in.

The potential parallel exists between this canoe experience and a child's journey with grief. I recall a lifeguard relaying her dissatisfaction with feeling removed from the children's grief at camp. When asked to describe how she spent her day, she, too, focused on the tippy-tests, explaining in great detail the children's enthusiasm as they paddled a canoe out into the water and flipped it over, ending up immersed in the lake. She described their effort to keep themselves afloat and upright the canoe to increase its stability and potential to support them. She recalled how the children eventually scrambled and pulled themselves back into the now-swamped canoe and began

bailing water. She talked about how they flailed in the cold water, floating on their life jackets, but ultimately alone. She shared the boost the campers experienced when they discovered it was easier to re-enter the canoe when they worked together. As I listened to the lifeguard describe how many of the campers had chosen to spend their day, recreating the experience repeatedly, I smiled as I reassured her that in my belief she was quite certainly supporting their grief process.

Last June, I was backpacking with a group of bereaved adolescents in the Flint Creek Range of western Montana. Surprisingly, we encountered knee- and then thigh-deep snow, which required strenuous trail-breaking and difficult navigating amidst very trying conditions. During the seven-mile excursion to a frozen lake, the teens pushed themselves hard through the challenging terrain, carrying three days of supplies on their backs. At different points along the undistinguishable trail, packers stopped, threw down their packs in exhaustion and exasperation, and expressed that they could not continue. The group gathered and drew parallels to the participants' lives. They articulated their desire to get somewhere, and feelings of uncertainty about their abilities to get there; of longing for someone to pick up part of their load and carry it for

them; of the difference between "I'm not sure I can do this" and "I'm not sure I want to do this, but I can do it." Ultimately, the group shifted the discussion to what was helpful when their packs are down, when their spirits are down, and when they don't want to go on. Themes of mutual support, hope, humor, and knowing they were not alone were brought up. The group made their way to the lake and, ultimately, when the time to depart arrived, they were reluctant to leave.

These two very different scenarios exemplify the power of metaphor in outdoor-based settings. In certain circumstances, considering developmental age and interaction goals, it can be helpful to illuminate potential metaphors or give voice to apparent parallels. Other times and with younger children, it is most beneficial for the experience to stand alone without debriefing or reducing the experience to language.

Immersion in an outdoor setting, surrounded and embraced by the wonders and miracles and trials of the natural world, fosters an awareness of the interconnection between living things. An opportunity to smell the pines and hear the crickets while lying on one's back, cushioned by the grasses and marveling at the night sky, can offer a

different perspective of one's place in the world and in this thing called life.

The benefits of placing a bereavement program within a natural setting are plentiful. Supervised wide-open space and inviting lakes provide constructive outlets for energy. Natural metaphors can facilitate understanding and insight development. Special logs and meadows can become natural gathering spots, conducive to building cohesion. Similarly, a favorite rock by the lake or area under a tree may be an inviting solo site, fostering reflection and contemplation. As campers and staff allow themselves to move into rhythm with the flow of the natural world around them, camp pace provides a respite from the busy-ness and disparate energy in city life. Feeling immersed and embraced in the natural world can inspire new revelations and shifts in understanding, and stimulate creative expression. Mary Oliver (1992) masterfully articulates a profound experience in her poem entitled White Flowers:

Last night
in the fields
I lay down in the darkness
to think about death,
but instead I fell asleep,
as if in a vast and sloping room

filled with those white flowers
that open all summer,
sticky and untidy
in the warm fields.

When I woke
the morning light was just slipping

In front of the stars,
and I was covered
with blossoms.

I don't know
how it happened -

I don't know
if my body went diving down
under the sugary vines
in some sleep-sharpened affinity
with the depths, or whether
that green energy
rose like a wave
and curled over me, claiming me
in its husky arms.

I pushed them away, but I didn't rise.
Never in my life had I felt so plush,
or so slippery,
or so resplendently empty.

Never in my life
had I felt myself so near
that porous line
where my own body was done with
and the roots and the stems and the flowers
began
(p. 58-59).

Freedom to Be

Initially subsumed by other themes, during the process of analysis it became abundantly clear that many interviewee comments and excerpts were multi-coded into a fifth major theme: Freedom to Be. The campers' abilities to articulate their experience of emotional freedom and authenticity in the camp setting was remarkable. When asked how camps can be structured to support children following the death of a family member, one camper responded:

I don't know, I think just letting the kids know or the people know it's okay, there is nothing to be afraid of, of being who you are and feeling what you feel. Letting them know it is okay. All of the people there have been through something like that and that helped me a lot. That's what helped me, just to know that I wasn't alone and there was gonna be people who

were going to cry and I could cry if I wanted to and if I wanted to laugh I could laugh. (Camper Miranda)

The companioning philosophy underlines meeting each grieving child in his or her unique experience. Naturally, a camp embracing this philosophy would support every child differently depending on that individual's needs and desires. The goals of camp can be very different even for the same camper different years. When asked how a camp could be helpful for grieving kids, Camper Brett remarked:

Well it depends what their goal is. It can either help them remember or help them get over it fast. Depends on what they want. The first year I just wanted to get over it fast and the second, it kind of depended on the way I was growing.

Brett described more interest in traditional camp activities one year, and increased interest in commemorative opportunities the next. The freedom to engage in the program in a way that feels natural, comfortable, and genuine for each participant is important.

Following two research projects, Irvin Yalom compiled a list of factors perceived by clients to be most salient to their improvement in therapy (Yalom, 1995). Among these was the client expressing him or herself congruently in the therapeutic setting. The themes resulting from this

project's data analysis supports the value of honest and genuine self-expression.

Grieving children can benefit from the opportunity to share feelings and experiences. This can be too risky in settings in which they feel vulnerable to ridicule or rejection. In a camp setting, grieving children can learn to trust others and begin to share some of their feelings and experiences in an accepting environment.

Implications for Counselors

Children directly responded to the question of how a bereavement camp could be structured to support grieving youth:

They always have someone to talk to and they can express their feelings and in the little groups you always talk about things and there is always someone to talk to (Camper George).

It is helpful that we have counselors that will do the stuff with you and they will talk with you. And then you have other people your age that you can talk to. Just to have a lot of people to talk to and do arts and crafts with and when you go swimming and stuff (Camper Jeanette).

Just knowing that you are not all by yourself in that situation, that other people are there, too. You feel more secure about not being left alone in the world (Camper Jackie).

"It is fun and you can make friends." (Camper Pippen).

Without question, counselors embarking on the journey of companioning bereaved children take on a multitude of roles. Because individual beliefs, values, and practices surrounding death and grief are endlessly diverse, we as professionals must exercise caution about what we propose is a "normal" response or reaction to loss. Despite being a part of a larger cultural and social context, each individual experiences grief uniquely. It is imperative that we resist assuming what would be most beneficial or most appropriate for others in the work of mourning.

Having said that, I offer the following ideas for supporting or companioning bereaved children. These guidelines represent a compilation of ideas stimulated by this project, as well as from my work with bereaved children since 1995, and incorporates thoughts and wisdom of some renowned clinical thanatologists and child

bereavement counselors (Doka, 1995; Trozzi et al., 1999; Wolfelt, 1996).

Tips for Companioning Bereaved Children in Camp

Settings

- Assess your personal grief history and how it influences biases, perspectives on death, dying and bereavement.
- Be careful not to project that children will (or should) feel exactly as we do.
- Don't assume that if a child is not talking about the loss that it hasn't affected him/her.
- Prepare children for what they can expect in a new situation.
- Respect the wavelike quality in children's expression of grief.
- Model expression of your own feelings and memories without shifting the focus away from the child.
- Encourage the child to teach you.
- Provide opportunities for remembering and commemorating deceased family members.
- Children commemorate the life and death of family members in ways uniquely meaningful to them. Provide opportunities for silence, talk, creative expression,

construction, physical activity, reading, writing, etc.

- Allow time to grieve. And more time.
- Offer constructive verbal and non-verbal outlets for a range of emotions.
- Remember it is okay not to have answers.
- Maintain a physically and emotionally safe environment.
- Allow for individual choice.
- Different children thrive in different settings and all children benefit from varied opportunities.
Incorporate structured and less-structured times, large group activities and small group or individual activities, times of physical exertion and times for contemplation, and indoor and outdoor activities into the schedule.
- Require that staff take breaks to center and rejuvenate themselves (e.g., walking or running, meditating, napping, writing, swimming, yoga, phone calls home, etc.).
- Have opportunities for staff to gather, debrief, problem-solve, exchange information, and be supported.

- Enjoy yourself. If the staff are having fun, it is more likely that the children are, too.

The staff team must possess both hard and soft skills. Staff pairings in cabins enable individuals with summer camp and outdoor activity experience (Activity Counselors) to pair with individuals who have special training and experience in therapeutic settings with grieving children (Bereavement Counselors). In recognition of the value and necessity of both roles, neither position is hierarchical, but rather offers unique and important skills to the cabin setting. The co-leaders can take turns representing the cabin in debriefings and with supervision during staff breaks.

At A Camp to Remember, a 3:1 camper/staff ratio has been maintained since the program began in 1997. While this exceeds the number of adults required to adequately supervise campers and lead activities, the need for extensive individualized attention and related flexibility in programming supports this ratio. None of the interviews reflected a perception of there being too many staff at camp; rather, campers and parents appreciated the attention and quality of service this ratio allowed.

When immersed in the positive feelings of connection, joy, sorrow, and support, amidst a gorgeous landscape

removed from the normal routine; seemingly experiencing a magical reality, it can be tempting to want to extend the program, and offer promises of reunions and endless follow-up contacts. Resist this impulse. Implementing follow-up activities in a deliberate and mindful manner, providing participants with resources of other community services which may be of interest and support, and conducting evaluations is certainly appropriate and necessary. The follow-up contact can be clearly articulated and exist within the scope of the program. Beyond that, allowing the camp to exist as a contained group experience with a distinct beginning, middle, and an anticipated, clear ending is also therapeutic.

Care providers drawn to companioning youth at a bereavement camp are indeed a special group. Leaders all bring forth unique and very personal gifts, challenges, agendas, histories, and energy to the setting. Likewise, they walk away touched in different ways.

In saying this, we must also state that, like the word "crisis," this work contains both dangers and opportunities. In opening us up to our greatest anxieties, it allows us to touch and know ourselves in a way that is not often available to us in our protective culture. One of the gifts that these

children have given us is the possibility of knowing ourselves more deeply, of understanding what other experiences mean for us. For this we offer thanks" (Bertman, p. 115).

Chapter Six: Conclusions

This study represented an attempt to learn more about how bereavement camps can be structured to support the grief process of children. Using a qualitative paradigm, the researcher interviewed ten bereavement camp participants. After these interviews were recorded and transcribed, the data were subjected to the process of constant-comparative analysis in an effort to derive a description of the children's perceptions of their experience. Interviews with parents, and the analysis of archival documents in the form of Exit Interviews of all camp participants, were used to triangulate the data and assess coherence between respondents.

At completion of the analysis, a set of five distinct themes emerged with great consistency across interviewees and additional data sources. These themes were: 1) Value of Connections with Peers and Staff; 2) Enjoyable Experiences; 3) Opportunities for Remembering and Commemoration; 4) Natural Setting / Nature-based Activities; and 5) Freedom to Be. The themes are not intended to be mutually exclusive, but rather consist of identifiable categories that interact and overlap with one another, while also existing as definable from one another.

This research, like the camp experience, is not intended to stand alone. The purpose of this research was to expand and deepen our current perspective and increase our understanding of how camps can support grieving children. Limitations of this study hinder the generalizability. The small sample size, representation of only the Euro-American cultural group, and singularity of site studied preclude generalizing the results of this inquiry beyond the scope of the case under study. However, the coherence between the semi-structured interview responses, analysis of archival documents, and related literature implies that the value of this data extends beyond being simply exploratory or anecdotal. Proponents of qualitative research would argue that studies of this nature can help bridge theory, research, and practice. As Janesick (2001) clarifies:

The value of the case study is in its uniqueness; consequently, reliability in the traditional sense of replicability is pointless here. I hope that we can... get on with the discussion of powerful statements from carefully done, rigorous long-term studies that uncover the meanings of events in individual's lives (p.394).

In this research on bereavement camps, the contribution lies in the centrality of the human voice - the bereaved child's voice - in guiding our understanding of what is therapeutic or healing.

Future development and implementation of bereavement camps would benefit from further research. An increasingly clear understanding of the risks, as well as the potential for mutual benefits, associated with bereavement research should be guided by further qualitative and quantitative research to enhance the process of ethical decision making. In recognition that the death of a family members affects the entire family system, an exploration of parental involvement in the bereavement camp would be beneficial.

Staff preparation for the camp experience was beyond the scope of this project. However, given the complexity of the role leaders assume in a bereavement camp program, a clearer understanding of the necessary components and efficacy of different forms of staff training, team-building, and orientation is timely. Research focusing on the characteristics and skills required to facilitate this kind of experience could guide professional development.

As with any inquiry, every response raises even more questions. We hear that natural settings are beneficial, but what is it about the setting that is beneficial?

How do campers utilize their camp experiences to facilitate their healing journeys?

Bereavement camps have great potential to support a child's journey with grief. The camp experience is not considered a cure-all, but rather, one piece of a much larger puzzle. Children thrive amidst relationships with others; moments of sheer joy; opportunities to remember, commemorate, and share; and the splendor and tranquility of the natural landscape, all the while embraced by the gentle support of competent leaders. This can be one stepping stone along a complex journey to integrate the death of a family member into a child's life.

In closing, I offer the words of Wendell Berry:

The Peace of Wild Things

When despair for the world grows in me
And I wake in the night at the least sound
In fear of what my life and my children's lives may
be,

I go and lie down where the wood drake
Rests in his beauty on the water,
And the great heron feeds.

I come into the peace of wild things who do not tax
their lives with forethought of grief.

I come into the presence of still water.

And I feel above me the day-blind stars waiting with
their light.

For a time

I rest in the grace of the world,

And am free

(in Williams, 1991, p. 215).

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Informed Consent

As part of my doctoral dissertation, I would like to look at how participants and parents view their experience with Camp O'Ki'Suya. The Counselor Education program at The University of Montana is committed to protecting individuals participating in research. The following information is provided so that you can decide whether or not you wish to participate in the present study. Even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

This study is concerned with how therapeutic camps can continually improve their structure to facilitate the bereavement process. Post-camp interviews with camp participants and their parents or guardians will elicit information about thoughts and opinions related to Camp O'Ki'Suya. These 30-45 minute interviews will take place at Partners Hospice, 500 N. Higgins. Your responses will help us learn more about how children respond to a bereavement camp program. Your confidentiality and that of your child is of paramount importance to us. Therefore, neither your name, nor your child's name, will be used to identify the source of information and no one outside of the research project will have access to the information discussed with the researcher except in situations which are required by law. These situations are described as follows: 1) If the researcher feels your child is in danger of harming him/herself or others, she is obligated to take action; 2) If instances of previously unreported child abuse are revealed, Montana State Law requires it to be reported. Every effort will be made to inform you first in either case.

The interviews are intended to supplement existing post-camp exit interviews which will be held with all campers. Although we do not anticipate any injuries associated with this study, we are required to include the following paragraph in this Informed Consent:

In the event that you are injured as a result of this research you should individually seek appropriate medical treatment. If the injury is caused by the negligence of The University of Montana or any of its employees, you may be entitled to reimbursement or compensation pursuant to the Comprehensive State Insurance Plan established by the Department of Administration under the authority of M.C.A., Title 2, Chapter 9. In the event of a claim for such injury, further information may be obtained from the University's Claims representative or University Legal Counsel.

Your participation is strictly voluntary. Be assured that your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. Do not hesitate to ask any questions about this study. If you would like additional information concerning this study before, during, or after it is completed, please feel free to contact us by phone or mail. Thank you for considering participating in this project.

Sincerely,

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Parent Permission

I have read the above information and had opportunities to ask questions about the research. I give permission for my child _____ to be interviewed as part of this study and for this interview to be audiotaped. I understand this recording is intended to maintain the accuracy of information and that the tapes will be destroyed within 1 year. I understand I am welcome to meet with the researchers to obtain information on possible assistance available for my child.

Signed _____ Date _____
Parent or Guardian

I have read the attached information and I do NOT give my permission for my child/children to be interviewed:

Signed _____ Date _____

Informed Consent Child

Hello Campers!

I am interested in finding out what you think about Camp O'Ki'Suya! I would like to talk to some of you about your experience at Camp. I want you to know that you can decide whether or not you want to meet with me. Even if you decide to meet with me to talk about Camp, you can change your mind anytime.

The interviews will be taped so I can enjoy listening to you at the interview and not worry about writing down everything you say as fast as I can. Your input will help me learn more about how camps can be most helpful for kids who have had someone in their family die. When I write up what I hear in all the interviews with different campers, your name will not be used to identify you as the source of information.

If you have questions, please ask me or your parents. Happy Summer!

Tina Barrett Hakanson

Participant Permission Child

This study was explained to me and I am willing to meet with Tina to talk about Camp O'Ki'Suya after camp is over. I know our conversation will be tape recorded.

Signed _____

Date _____

(Child)

I have been informed about this study and am NOT willing to be interviewed as part of the study.

Signed _____

Date _____

(Child)

Participant Permission
Parent/Guardian

I have been informed about this study and am willing to be interviewed as part of the study. I understand the interview will be audiotaped and that I will receive a copy of the Informed Consent for my records

Signed _____ Date _____
(Parent/Guardian)

I have been informed about this study and am NOT willing to be interviewed as part of the study.

Signed _____ Date _____
(Parent/Guardian)

Research Questions:

1. How can camp experiences be structured to facilitate the bereavement process?
2. What aspects of the camp were most beneficial in the perception and experience of the participants?

**Interview Protocol
Camp Participant**

1. How did you find out about Camp O'Ki'Suya?
2. Tell me about the kinds of things you did at camp; what you enjoyed the most? least?
3. Tell me a story about something that happened at camp.
4. How would you describe Camp O'Ki'Suya?
5. In what ways do you think a camp can be helpful for kids who have had a parent or brother or sister die?

Research Questions:

1. How can camp experiences be structured to facilitate the bereavement process?
2. What aspects of the camp were most beneficial in the perception and experience of the participants?

**Interview Protocol
Parent/Guardian**

1. How did you find out about Camp O'Ki'Suya?
2. What hopes or expectations did you have for the program and for your child in the program?
3. How did the camp experience fit with your hopes and expectations?
4. How did your child respond to the camp experience?
Do you see any behavioral or emotional changes?
5. What do you believe are the valuable or most important components to the program?

**A Camp to Remember
Exit Interview Summary 2000**

A Camp To Remember in 2000 served 35 bereaved children - 19 females and 16 males with the average age being 10. The vast majority of campers responded to the question of how it was for them to at camp with some fun, or some variation on that theme. Camp activities were cited as the most enjoyable part of their experience, not surprisingly. These ranged from swimming (the most common answer) to arts and singing. The community of camp was also strongly represented in their answers. Making new friends or hanging out with friends from previous years seemed to provide not only positive social experience, but also one within the unique context which brought them all together. Many indicated that they felt safe and supported within the camp experience to explore their grief through ritual, the sharing of their story or within the silent acceptance of all involved.

**A Camp to Remember
Exit Interview Summary 2002**

A Camp to Remember served 43 bereaved children in 2002 with the average age of the camper as 11(.3). The fun of camp consistently comes up as the most frequently cited response by the campers. When asked specifically to describe camp there was a resounding "fun" enthusiastically stated. This sense of good time often was connected with a specific activity that the camper identified as an integral part of their camp experience. While it is impossible to separate out the responses from the particular experience and setting they were exposed to, it is worth noting that the majority of comments that related to what was positive about camp for them had to do with activities rooted in immersion in the outdoors. Most often these were activities associated with being immersed in or on the lake (e.g. swimming, canoeing/kayaking). Some spoke of sitting around the fire (I'll always remember when we sat by the fire and sang") or the night on the dock under the stars.

The community of new and old friends also was a major component of the camp cited. There were numerous references to "making new friends" and the shared experiences of the fun filled days. Many articulated the shared history of loss and the sense of comfort and belonging within that - "It is a fun time with people who know what you've gone through." This complexity of fun within the common background of loss is missed by few. One camper stated this well when he said that camp is "four days of mixed emotions. Fun and laughter, and at least one night of crying." Many note the commonality of grief as a significant factor. Commemorative activities are often stated as significant parts of camp.

Staff are included in the references toward community. It is clear that significant relationships form across generations. The often stated response related to the sharing of the loss, while not always explicitly stated, unfolds within the presence of supportive staff. These relationships form equally in the lake and around the campfire as they do within the telling of a story about the loved one lost during small group time.

ANNIE: CAMPER INTERVIEW 1998

- Tina: So Annie, let's start with how did you learn about Camp O'Ki'Suya?
- Annie: One of my mom's friends. I think it was (name).
- Tina: OK. So (name) told you about camp. What did she say about it.
- Annie: She talked to my mom about it. I wasn't in the room and my mom came in my room and she said, "Annie, do you want to go this fun camp?" And I said, "Yeah, sure whatever." (laugh)
- Tina: So you knew somebody that already knew about the camp and heard you could go. Tell me about the kinds of things that you did at camp.
- Annie: I just like made stuff for my secret pal. I washed dishes once. It was just really fun.
- Tina: Sometimes people do different things at different times so it is fun for me to hear what you did at camp.
Does anything else stand out in your mind?
- Annie: Well going to sleep was about the funnest thing because after all that fun and playing and stuff you finally get to just zonk out!
- Tina: You're wiped out at night! What did you like the most?
- Annie: Good question. Hmmm. I liked everything. (pause) One thing that I really liked was the guy that came with the thing that you could tip over to make that shingaling sound, the rain stick. That was really fun. That was cool.
- Tina: What kinds of things did you do with the rain stick?
- Annie: Well we would like pass it to people who wanted to tell stories or something. And I didn't do it

because I didn't have any stories in mind. But the stick was weird and cool at the same time.

Tina: Really intriguing. What sorts of stories?

Annie: Well their animals or pets that died. And then, you know how an iceberg is, a little bit of it is sticking out and the rest is under and the rest is under, your thoughts are under and you just tell what you just got to say, I don't know.

Tina: So even if I hear a bit of your story, it is just the tip of the iceberg

Annie: Yeah.

Tina: So that really struck you.

Annie: Oh that was really cool.

Tina: Nice. That is fun to hear about. Annie, was there something that you did not like about camp?

Annie: Maybe the leachy water. Nothing that you guys did made anything that I didn't like. Everything I liked that you guys did, it was just really cool.

Tina: So you liked a lot of the activities and stuff, but the fact that there were leaches in the water and what not you didn't like.

Annie: And that I got a leach stuck between my toes.

Tina: You got a leach stuck on you?

Annie: Yes, I did.

Tina: Oh, Annie. Were you the only one?

Annie: No, Pippen did, too.

Tina: So that must've stood out in your mind!

Annie: I'm like, "Whoa". (undecipherable)

Tina: Wow, so that is one of those camp stories that I bet sticks in your mind just about as well as the

rain stick. Anything else that you did not like about camp?

Annie: Hmmm. The shaving cream fight I did not like.

Tina: Can you say more about that?

Annie: I got shaving cream stuck in my ears, up my nose, in my eyes and my mouth, in my clothes, in my hair, and people just kept on coming at me and people just kept on coming and I had like the worst taste in my mouth that I had ever tasted, it was sick. That stuff stings my skin.

Tina: I don't think it is meant to be all over your body like that!

Annie: Yeah.

Tina: Well, Annie, tell me a story about something that happened at camp.

Annie: Any particular story?

Tina: Any story.

Annie: When I was laying in bed looking up and I thought I saw a hole but then it moved. And I kind of freaked out, and then it moved again and started to form as an angel or whatever it was. It was about three or four inches tall, three, four inches wide including a little round glow and then it started coming toward me. And I exploded. Threw the covers over my head, rubbed my eyes like I never rubbed my eyes before. And then I just, when I looked again it was still there and I'm like "oh, no" and I just prayed for it to go away and when I looked again it was gone. But then it played with me. How it, it just flashed lights all over the place and I was just looking around, ooh, ooh, wonderful, it was just really amazing. I thought it was trying to tell me something. Whenever it would, it would just go into a piece of wood and then come back out and act like it was talking to a microphone or something it's hair was all frizzed out and had like, it looked like a stage performer.

Tina: OK.

Annie: And it was, I don't know, it was just like it didn't look realistic. It wasn't white it wasn't any color that anybody has ever seen before. You could see through it but then the light stopped it. You could see through it part way and then you couldn't see through it. It just was weird. It was really bizarre.

Tina: It sounds like a fascinating experience that was really scary.

Annie: It was very scary.

Tina: So what happened next.

Annie: I just woke up, well I just finally I got so tired I just fell on my pillow and totally zonked.

Tina: What was the message for you in that experience?

Annie: I'm not sure yet. Maybe it was telling me that something was going to happen in the future like that to me or something because that thing was very skinny and I am very skinny. And it looked like a good singer and my mom always says that I am a good singer. And it just really surprised me when I saw it because, you know this little glow thing is up there and you're lying there in bed and you're cuddling this white animal when I looked up and it had moved, I looked up, my stuffed animal I got, I threw it aside, I'm like, MM MM MM I'm so scared.

Tina: Do you think anything that was going on at camp or any of the activities influenced that happening?

Annie: Everybody was very loving and I really don't know why it boomed out that time. It just kind of came out of a clear sky.

Tina: Thank you for sharing that, anything else that you want to add?

- Annie: There isn't really anything else.
- Tina: Annie, you went to Camp O'Ki'Suya and I went to Camp O'Ki'Suya. How would you describe camp to someone that hasn't been there?
- Annie: It is a camp that is the best camp that I will probably ever go to. You have to do chores but the chores are fun. Not bad chores. And it is just really fun you get to eat a lot.
(undecipherable)
- Tina: (laugh) No shortage of food.
- Annie: And you really want to go there. Pretty cool for me, the first time I went there. Maybe you can go.
- Tina: Annie, how do you think a camp can help a kid who has had a parent or a brother or sister die?
- Annie: Just being as loving as you guys were and teaching them responsibility. You have to go on with your life and just because one balloon popped, the rest don't have to. They will always be with you and you can always say they are not totally gone, that they are still with you. They are in your heart and it is just really good, it was just really wonderful how you guys were so caring and so loving and stuff. It was just really great.
- Tina: Are there other ways that a camp can help kids?
- Annie: I have no idea.
- Tina: I don't either, that's why I ask you.
- Annie: Well seeing all those animals out there, I had never seen a real gopher, I had never seen a real moose and I was this far away from that moose and was practically, I'm like Ooh Ooh, it's a big one. There were three out there it was just really creepy how there's three moose out there and our cabin isn't all that far away from the

forest and it's like ooh, I wonder. All those animals out there. It was so cool.

Tina: So it sounds like it was kind of spooky and kind of cool.

Annie: Yeah.

Tina: (Undecipherable) so Annie, what you are referring to when I say how can a camp be helpful, you are talking about seeing gophers for the first time and moose for the first time and seeing animals and being close to them and living in cabins - how do you think the outdoor setting helps?

Annie: You get to trip in gopher holes, (laughter) you get to do camp fires. You can do a lot of stuff out there. I think for me was that it was incredible to see those huge moose and when we were just coming out of our cabin thinking everything was perfectly normal and there's a moose in front of us. Like whoa, I'm just going to turn and go back to the cabin.

Tina: I don't really have any more particular questions. Are there any other thoughts you want to add.

Annie: Let me think. I don't think so.

Tina: If you were in charge of the camp any particular things you would want to make sure happen?

Annie: A lot of the stuff the same, actually most of it.

Tina: Is that right?

Annie: Maybe even all of it, I don't know. I can't really remember. I've been to so many camps I think that I maybe think that, I just put all these camps together and think what, that's not right, nope, um, what, um, hmm.

Tina: I wondered how that was going to be for you to try to remember O'Ki'Suya knowing you just came back from another camp (undecipherable).

BRETT: CAMPER INTERVIEW 1998

Tina: Brett, I'm so glad you are here. This will be good to hear your input about your experience at camp because you have gone through a camp you already have a lot of ideas that people that have never gone, they wouldn't necessarily know. And you've gone two years, so you are a double expert. So the first thing I'd like to hear is how did you even find out about Camp O'Ki'Suya?

Brett: I don't know, I think my dad got a letter in the mail and he didn't know who it was from so he read it.

Tina: So tell me about your decision to go to camp?

Brett: I don't know it would be fun to get away from home for once instead of having to stay by my dad's side all the time.

Tina: Something appealing about getting out of the house.

Brett: Yeah.

Tina: Tell me about the kinds of things you did at camp?

Brett: The tie dye, the clay, the Indian dance one and the guitar but I can't remember them all.

Tina: The tie dying and the clay and the Indian dance and guitar, ok, what did you like the most?

Brett: The tie dying.

Tina: Uh huh. The shirt you are wearing today?

Brett: Yep.

Tina: That's great. Anything else?

Brett: The clay because I could make a mold of my cat. And my cat, she is sort of sick depending on what day it is, because every now and then she will

throw up for no reason and she is getting way fatter than she used to, so (pause)

Tina: [undecipherable]

Brett: Well no she is not always sick yet, it is just that, yeah, in a way she is sick, but not as much as she used to be. It used to be every day I'd come home and there would be at least four puke spots on the floor.

Tina: [undecipherable]

Brett: The only thing I can think would be the drive over there and back. It's so far apart.

Tina: Tell me about that. The distance.

Brett: Yeah. On the other side of the state. I don't like long drives.

Tina: Ok. (pause) Well, Brett tell me a story about something that happened at camp.

Brett: This year or last?

Tina: Either

Brett: Well I found out I had a hard time getting in my bunk. I tried using the rafters like I used to get into my bunk last year and that is why I had to use a different bed and my counselor didn't like it much so I always had to sneak in to my bunk when he wasn't watching.

Tina: [undecipherable]

Brett: Sort of like that. I got the Tarzan award, so kind of like a monkey.

Tina: So you were swinging off the rafters to get into your bunk.

Brett: Yeah.

Tina: When the counselor wasn't looking.

Both: (laughter)

Brett: Yeah, he didn't like that, he thought I'd hit someone, but I usually kept my tucked my feet in like a bird

Tina: Ok. So flying like a bird, kind of like Tarzan through the cabins. (laughter) Oh, Brett, you've been to camp and I've been to camp so it is easy for us to know what it is for us. How would you describe Camp O'ki'suya to someone who hasn't been there?

Brett: It will be one of the funnest experiences you've had, one of the best experiences.

Tina: [undecipherable]

Brett: Yeah. The mess hall is made out of a log cabin, most other places just have it made out of a standard wood buildings

Tina: It's been there awhile hasn't it

Brett: It has also been decorated with the two canoes. [undecipherable - something like -That's what's my dad's is, not the normal simple stuff like taking out the trash]

Tina: (laughter) You remember the canoes hanging up in the mess hall in a log building at camp, and taking out the trash on a daily basis at home.

Brett: Yeah.

Tina: [undecipherable]

Brett: Well it depends on the counselors. Like this last year we got to throw our counselor in the water. Then the year before we tried getting Pele in but we couldn't and he ended up pushing at least four or five of us in. And the tie dye I thought we would sort of do it again this year, and I'm one for making my own shirts. Except if you count out the mosquitoes it's great. There's no, I've got at least five bites on me.

Tina: Brett, how can a camp help kids who've had a parent or brother or sister die?

Brett: (clears voice) Well it depends what their goal is. It can either help them remember or help them get over it fast. Depends on what they want. The first year I just wanted to get over it fast and the second I kind of depended on the way I was growing

Tina: So it can help different kids differently. How was your experience this year different [undecipherable]

Brett: That is something I can't really explain it is hard.

Tina: Hard to put into words.

Brett: Yeah.

Tina: [undecipherable] what I hear you saying is your goals were different the last couple years.

Brett: They both went good, the way I expected.

Tina: Are there any other ways a camp can help kids?

Brett: Well they can help their physical ability. I know it helped mine because when I went there I was doing bad in gym class and after I got out I was, my grades were getting a little higher.

Tina: What do you make of that?

Brett: I think it was all the running around we did, the exercise and hiking between cabins.

Tina: OK. Was that an important part of camp for you?

Brett: Well, sort of.

Tina: What would you say are the some of the most important things of camp.

(pause)

Brett: I don't know. I thought they were all important.

Tina: It is hard to decide.

Brett: Yeah.

Tina: That is all the questions that I have written down, Brett, but what I really want to understand is, OK Brett, let's say you were in charge of camp, what would you do the same and what would you do differently?

Brett: Well, the same, I'd probably do a lot of the same things and probably the only thing I would do differently would be help the cooks or set up the camp.

Tina: [undecipherable]

Brett: And try to get the mattresses so they were even. The one I had last year had an extra pad on it and my head kept falling back to where I'd bang the wall.

Tina: So it was a little challenge to stay on the bunk during the night.

Brett: Yeah. At least I didn't move around too much or I would have slid off.

Tina: [undecipherable] Some of the changes would be mattresses or helping the cooks.

Brett: I'd just like to have a couple of mattresses on the side that way if they wanted extra padding they could get one of those.

Tina: Brett, thank you. Anything else?

Brett: I don't know a few but I don't think they'll get electricity out that far.

Tina: Where would you put the electricity?

Brett: For heat, extra heat and I don't know possibly a dryer, I don't know that's all you'd need

Tina: [undecipherable]

Brett: I wasn't one of them but every time I woke up I heard a few boys say, "Sheesh it's cold in here, we got to get some heat in here quick".

Tina: [undecipherable]

Brett: Yeah.

Both: (laughter)

Brett: Only that everyone is happy. That is important.

PIPPEN: CAMPER INTERVIEW 1998

Pippen: I think we got a letter in the mail.

Tina: So you got a letter in the mail and opened it up, and what did you think it was going to be like?

Pippen: You'd have to do push ups to eat lunch or dinner or breakfast.

Tina: Wow, that is not something that we did at camp, do you wish we would have done that?

Pippen: NO!

Tina: (laughter) Because we could add it! Pippen, different campers chose to do different things at camp. Tell me about the kinds of things that you did at camp.

Pippen: Well, I got swimmer's itch, which I didn't choose to do, and I went fishing and I made a lizard out of beads and I made a necklace out of llama hair and I carried a llama around, and that is pretty much all.

Tina: What did you like the most?

Pippen: The shaving cream fight.

Tina: What did you like about that?

Pippen: I splattered [counselor's name] a lot, and I splattered Candy and Jackie and Leif and Darren [campers].

Tina: [undecipherable]. What did you not like about camp?

Pippen: Umm, getting swimmer's itch. It came from the lake because I had to go get one of the, had to go get, what's his name, I forgot his name, he was in my cabin, Irvin or something

Tina: Vinny?

Pippen: Yeah, Vinny. Yeah, Vinny. I had to go get his fishing thing that was stuck in the weedy stuff and I swam out there and got it and I think this thing got onto me and it made me have swimmer's itch.

Tina: [undecipherable]

Pippen: Uh huh. I hated it.

Tina: What else did you not like about camp?

Pippen: Umm, ummmm, [pause] ummmm, I don't know

Tina: Pippen,

Pippen: What?

Tina: Tell me a story about something that happened at camp.

Pippen: Umm. Ummm. Ummm. [Pause] I don't know, I don't know a story.

Tina: You can tell a story about the shaving cream fight or the water or boats, or the memory trail, or fishing or anything

Pippen: Oh yeah, it's about the boats. I got this tiger on my bed named Hobbes. His Mommy died, too so I made a candle for Hobbes' Mommy and I sailed it out and it was the last one that was lit, it was last one that was burning still. And after it stopped burning, it sunk. That was neat. [Pause]

Tina: [undecipherable]

Pippen: Yep. [pause] I still have Hobbes. He is sitting in my room. I've got fish for him to watch, too. Sometimes I even let him feed the fish.

Tina: [undecipherable]

Pippen: My boat was small. It was about not even the size of this little radio thing.

Tina: How would you describe your boat?

Pippen: Actually I had five boats, they were the farthest ones out and my boat just had a little leaf on it and a candle on it, too.

Tina: What did the boats mean to you?

Pippen: Umm, I don't know. [pause] A lot.
[undecipherable]

Tina: [undecipherable]

Pippen: Yeah. Somebody helped me make it.

Tina: How was that for you?

Pippen: Good. And I almost went over to Candy and Darren's house yesterday but I had to go to the Santana concert.

Tina: You just had to go to the concert.

Pippen: Um hmm.

Tina: So you have been in touch with Candy and Darren and Leif?

Pippen: Um hmm. And Jackie.

Tina: And Jackie.

Pippen: And I got the letter that you guys sent me.

Tina: So Pippen, you've been to camp, and I've been to camp, but how would you describe Camp O'Ki'Suya to somebody who has never been there?

Pippen: That it was fun. And wasn't there another girl named Tina last year that came?

Tina: Just me, but I wasn't pregnant last year.

Pippen: No I thought there was another lady, there was another girl in high school and that was her name, because we were in that blinking game and she was the blinker.

Tina: From last year? You have an amazing memory. Maybe it was [names].

Pippen: I think it was Theresa.

Tina: Pippen, one thing I really want to hear from you before we go today,

Pippen: Yeah

Tina: How do you think a camp can help kids who have had a parent die?

Pippen: I don't know.

Tina: Are there certain things that are important that we do at camp that should do, or that we should keep doing or shouldn't do at all?

Pippen: I think you should put swimmer's itch infested in the lake

Tina: We should get rid of any chance of swimmer's itch

Pippen: Um hmm.

Tina: I wonder if that is possible to do?

Pippen: I don't know.

Tina: I don't know either but we should look into it because that sounds like the worst part of camp for you. Are there ways that a camp can help kids.

Pippen: Um hmm. The dream boats and the memory trail.

Tina: So those are things you think we should leave, then dream boats and the memory trail.

Pippen: Yep.

Tina: [undecipherable]

Pippen: And there are things that are mushed up butter and you wrap them up in toilet paper and you have a fight with that.

Tina: (laughter) You have all kinds of ideas

Pippen: But you tie the toilet paper really loose so that when it hits them it splatters all over.

Tina: Oh, who taught you that one?

Pippen: My baby sitter.

Tina: Oh, great. Pippen, is there anything else you want to tell me about camp before we go?

Pippen: [shakes head indicating no]

Tina: Pippen, I really appreciate talking with you.

GWEN: CAMPER INTERVIEW 1998

Tina: How did you find out about camp?

Gwen: [undecipherable]

Tina: Ok.

Gwen: [undecipherable]

Tina: How did you make the decision to go to camp?

Gwen: [undecipherable]

Tina: So you saw this camp and you were having troubles getting over your stuff, and you thought

Gwen: [undecipherable]

Tina: There were a lot of different activities at camp. Which activities did you participate in?

Gwen: [undecipherable]

Tina: What comes to mind for you?

Gwen: [undecipherable]

Tina: [undecipherable]

Gwen: [undecipherable]

Tina: What was your favorite?

Gwen: [undecipherable]

Tina: How about the [undecipherable]

Gwen: [undecipherable]

Tina: [undecipherable]

Gwen: [undecipherable]

Tina: [undecipherable] Tell me a story about something that happened at camp?

Gwen: [undecipherable]

Tina: So the dreams [undecipherable] and the talking was important to you. Sounds like that experience [undecipherable].

Gwen: [undecipherable]

Tina: [undecipherable]

Gwen: [undecipherable]

Tina: [undecipherable] How would you describe camp?

Gwen: [undecipherable]

Tina: What if someone who hadn't been there asked what is this Camp O'Ki'Suya, what is it?

Gwen: [undecipherable]

Tina: So I just go up to camp, and I'll do some activities?

Gwen: [undecipherable]

Tina: In what ways, what would you say is most helpful [undecipherable].

Gwen: [undecipherable]

Tina: [undecipherable]

JEANETTE: CAMPER INTERVIEW 1998

Tina: How did you find out about camp?

Jeanette: Um, I went to Seasons and then they contacted me about the camp so then I went to it.

Tina: Was it a tough choice for you?

Jeanette: Uh huh because I was thinking three night without my mom, should I do it or should I not. Finally I decided to do it.

Tina: How did you decide to do it?

Jeanette: Well it really was that before I went to camp I went camping with my uncle and my aunt. My mom didn't go because she had to work so I made up my mind because I was there and it was only my aunt and my uncle.

Tina: So you had kind of tried out being away from home before.

Jeanette: Uh huh.

Tina: Well Jeanette, as you know at camp different people sign up for different things and different people do different activities. Tell me about the kinds of things that you did at camp.

Jeanette: Well I did the beading and weaving and the, hmm I didn't do the fishing but I did the pottery and the memory boats and I forget what else I did. Oh I did the llamas, too. Yeah. I can't remember what else I did. Oh yeah, I made the memory, the boxes where you put things inside.

Tina: What did you like the most?

Jeanette: I liked the art workshop and the beading and weaving.

Tina: How about the least?

Jeanette: Well the least, I didn't really like, hmmm what didn't I like. I don't know. I can't remember that.

Tina: If you think of that, you can tell me. Is there anything you didn't like about camp?

Jeanette: Hmm. Well I didn't really like going swimming because the water is cold. That is probably the only thing I didn't like doing.

Tina: So how did you handle that?

Jeanette: I just sat on the shore with everybody, well with mostly with counselors.

Tina: How did that work for you?

Jeanette: OK because Jami [peer] didn't really like the water either so she sat with me.

Tina: So you hung out together.

Jeanette: Uh huh.

Tina: Jeanette, tell me a story about something that happened at camp.

Jeanette: Umm. Well what I liked most is that our cabin, because we had [counselor name] and she had that Teddy Bear that sang and when we did the camp fire, when we sang it when we were at camp fire, that was my favorite.

Tina: When you sang that song with the teddy bear.

Jeanette: Um hmm, it was mostly me and Jami that memorized it because we were right by [counselor name].

Tina: That was a special bear. Tell me about the song that you learned and sang.

Jeanette: Well it's mostly about that you don't have to be bigger or smaller as long as you have friends that you like. It was neat. He wasn't very loud though. Something that was partly a problem. He was ok.

Tina: So your bear needed a microphone or something.

Jeanette: Yeah.

Both: (laughter)

Tina: OK. Jeanette, I've been to camp and you've been to camp, a lot of people haven't. How would you describe Camp O'ki'suya?

Jeanette: Really fun and lots of activities to do. They really keep you busy so there's not like wandering off or doing nothing, you just keep on doing activities. (pause). And that if you feel sad there is always a counselor that you can sit with, there usually always is because there is lots of them. (Pause) Hmm. I don't know what else I should say.

Tina: One thing that I really want to know, Jeanette, how can a camp be helpful for someone who has had a brother or sister or parent die?

Jeanette: Well, it is kind of like the whole camp is a family for the days we spend together and that we help each other like doing the dishes and learning new things. Especially in the cabin you meet new friends or you see the same friends you saw last year and it is really fun.

Tina: So are there other ways that camps can help kids?

Jeanette: Maybe that you can learn that you don't want to throw away pictures of the people that you lost. You want to keep them and you might want to use them in a memory book or something. It is really fun.

Tina: Jeanette, this is really helpful to hear your input because you have been to camp a couple of different times. I don't have any other set questions but I'd love to hear from you if there is anything else that I should know or consider or think about

Jeanette: OK.

Tina: Can you think of anything else about camp that would be important, that is an important part of camp or that you would change?

Jeanette: Like if they want to, like I'd like to see more animals, like we did the llamas, like maybe we could bring like cats or dogs or something. I like cats because they make you feel [undecipherable] because they are fuzzy and stuff.

Tina: So the animals were a really important part for you. So if you were in charge of camp you would have a lot of animals.

Jeanette: Um hmm.

Tina: What else, if you were in charge of the camp, how would you do it?

Jeanette: I think that we would get to go canoeing more and the kids would help cook, like there would be another team that helped the cooks. I'd have two treasure hunts like we did but there's only one group and you do it both the same time, well, and then half of the group goes one place and finds one clue and the other half goes another place and finds another clue and at the same time they read it and you'd have to have walkie talkies and stuff.

Tina: So you are kind of working on the same projects but there are different people working on different parts of the project.

Jeanette: Yeah, yeah, so that like when they found the last clue then both of the groups would be at the same place at the same time.

Tina: OK. If you were in charge of the camp, Jeanette, what would you do completely different?

Jeanette: Hmm. What would I do completely different. I would make the cabins a lot better, but um, and I would probably get a couple more canoes so that maybe the whole camp can go canoeing together.

And I don't know what I'd change or do completely different. I would have a little more rest time so people can do more things and share more stuff. And I'd get more animals so that every one can get an animal for themselves. I think like a couple years, well the first year I went that most people didn't have stuffed animals so like at the end they got their stuffed animal so that was really cool.

Tina: So stuffed animals are an important thing, too.

Jeanette: Yeah.

Tina: Is there anything else that you want to tell me about camp?

Jeanette: I'd have more stations like a animal station where you go and see animals a little like zoo place and you get to go and stay with the animals for like a half an hour.

Tina: A little zoo place?

Jeanette: Um hmm.

Tina: Jeanette, thank you so much, it is really helpful to hear your ideas.

MIRANDA: CAMPER INTERVIEW 2000

Tina: I have a handful of questions about camp and we can use those as a guide but we can drift where ever. How did you find out about A Camp to Remember?

Miranda: A friend of mine who went there, (camper name).

Tina: How did they describe it to you?

Miranda: Um, they didn't really. (laughter)

Tina: OK, hmmm, but something about what she said made you decide to go?

Miranda: Um, yeah, sure.

Tina: What was it that made camp seem like something you would want to do?

Miranda: She said it was really fun and that it was one of the funnest things that she did all summer long every year.

Tina: At camp there were some activities that were optional and some that everybody did. What kind of things did you do at camp?

Miranda: I swam a lot, (pause) what else, I did a lot of art work. It was really fun. It kind of made me feel better and sometimes if I wasn't feeling too good I would just sit in the cabin and talk to someone about it.

Tina: Swimming, and a lot of art work, what sort of art work did you do?

Miranda: We did a lot of drawing, yeah, stuff like that.

Tina: You did a lot of drawing, did you draw all sorts of things or what sorts of things did you create?

Miranda: Um. I don't know, pictures for my dad and that's one of the things I remember drawing. Sometimes

we would just do our handprints or little fun things like that.

Tina: You also spent some time in your cabin just talking with someone.

Miranda: Yeah.

(pause)

Tina: So quite a mixture of different things. What kinds of things at camp did you enjoy the most?

Miranda: I don't know, it was, I don't have a most. It was all really good, a good experience for me. I really liked the memory boats.

Tina: Tell me about the memory boats or your experience with the memory boats.

Miranda: Well, you like make, you take bark and you put little naturalistic things on it that remind you of your dad or whoever you've lost or what you want to work towards and goals you have. It was a great experience, it felt like I was letting go a little bit more.

Tina: (Undecipherable.)

Miranda: I don't know. I really liked both parts letting it go and watching it go and also making it because they both have significant parts like putting together made me remember everything and letting it go made me, made me feel really peaceful, something that I was doing for him.

Tina: Wow. Do you want to describe or create a scenario of how you let the boats go?

Miranda: Well we went on the dock. We all had our boats with us and the people that were going to let them go for all the way just let them go. We got on the dock and when they got up to the wobbly dock they would light a candle and then they would go let it go. People were crying everywhere and it was kind of sad but you know it was good to cry because you get your feelings out. And the

people that didn't want to let it go forever, their creations, they would tie a string to it and then let it go and pull it back in later.

Tina: You create a really nice visual image of that. Miranda, what were the parts of camp that you enjoyed the least?

Miranda: I really don't know. There was not really a favorite for me but there wasn't a least either. There was nothing that I really disliked a lot about it. I think that we could have spent more time with the younger kids because I like younger kids but I also liked having time away from them sometimes.

Tina: So having more time with different ages having opportunities to be together.

Miranda: Yea.

Tina: Everybody comes away from camp with different stories and experiences. Tell me a story about something that happened at camp for you.

Miranda: I don't know.

Tina: (Pause) How about a typical morning, or day time, or evening.

Miranda: I really liked the food. It was like the best food that I've ever had. I don't know why that I liked it but I really liked the food a lot. And lets see. It was kind of fun having counselors in the cabin because at night with our counselors we would talk with them sometimes. And one time they sat up reading to us until we all fell asleep, that was kind of cool. Also, when we, when the cabin got together and talked about how the people in our family, who we lost and stuff, it was kind of a connecting time, a bonding period. It was really fun because we all got to know each other. Yeah.

Tina: You really felt like you got to know the people in your cabin and had some special times with that group.

Miranda: Yeah.

Tina: Miranda, if you met someone who was totally interested in what is this camp all about who had never been there, how would you describe A Camp to Remember, or bereavement camp to them?

Miranda: I don't know. This is, I don't know, it is like the hardest question anyone could ask because it's like an unexplainable camp. You get so many different feelings from it and there are so many experiences and oh it's just good it makes me all tingly (laugh). Um. I don't know.

Tina: So if I was a camper and I was thinking about going and I was like Miranda, bereavement camp, why, what is bereavement camp all about?

Miranda: I would probably tell you it was about, I don't know, helping you get used to it and meeting people who are in positions that are like yours and knowing you are not alone.

Tina: So will we sit around and cry the whole time?

Miranda: No, there are so many happy times, it is so fun. You have so much fun. You sit and, there are times when you want to laugh the rest of the day and there are times when you want to do nothing but sit down and cry. There's so many different feelings. There are times when everyone wants to be funny and hilarious and times when people want to be serious or times when people feel like laughing or just talking or being quiet and shy and everyone is good with it, everyone is fine with how you feel.

Tina: That is a real interesting part of camp and I'm not sure exactly what it is that lets that happen. How can a bereavement camp help to support kids to feel whatever they feel like feeling. What is it that gives you permission to laugh when you want to laugh and cry when you want to cry, to be quiet or to talk?

Miranda: I don't know, I think just letting the kids know or the people know it's okay, there is nothing to be afraid of, of being who you are and feeling what you feel. Letting them know it is okay. All of the people there have been through something like that and that helped me a lot. That's what helped me, just to know that I wasn't alone and there was gonna be people who were going to cry and I could cry if I wanted to and if I wanted to laugh I could laugh. Yeah.

Tina: It is really hard to know all the pieces that come together to make a camp what it is. If you were put in charge of camp, what do you feel like you would make sure to keep the same. What are the important parts of camp? And which parts would you change? You mentioned more interaction between older and younger campers.

Miranda: I would change that. I think that that interactions a good part of it. I mean there was a lot of interaction but there could have been more I guess.

Tina: I ask these questions because I believe camp can always become better, but only if we stop and look at what is happening and what could be different, so we just learn from every year saying what are we doing well, what do we want to make sure to keep the same and what could we do better, what needs to be different? In what ways do you think a camp can be beneficial to a young person, a child or adolescent who has had a parent die or a family member die?

Miranda: I don't know. (silence 12 sec.) Well, (silence 19 sec.)

Tina: It seems like some camps could be helpful for some things and other camps could be helpful for other things. When I ask the question about [undecipherable] Is camp helpful for kids who have had someone in their family die?

Miranda: (nod)

Tina: If so, what is it about camp [undecipherable].

Miranda: Uhhhh. Sigh. I don't know how to answer that. I'm not sure. I think it can definitely be helpful, but (shakes head).

Tina: Do you think it makes a difference if the camp is outside, or up on a lake versus in town?

Miranda: I think it made a difference for me because it was peaceful where we were. It was pretty and you could just go sit and be alone and be with the water or be with the trees or be with anything you don't have to listen to cars going by or see buildings. If you look out the window and you see a big building, you know, that is not the kind of thing that I really look up to I don't really care for big buildings and streets.

Tina: It is not where you feel most peaceful.

Miranda: Yeah.

Tina: So a peaceful setting provides something

Miranda: For me, yeah.

Tina: You talked about the importance of counselors that are in the cabins and that your counselors read stories and do you have other thoughts or comments about the counselors and the role of the counselors at camp. What is helpful and what is not.

Miranda: I thought they were all pretty helpful. They like, I liked how they even if they weren't your counselor they got to know you and they would all come up to you and be like "Hi, my name is so and so good to see you and that you came" and they welcomed you there and they were all really friendly about it. I thought it was good because sometimes you would get tired of your cabin counselors and because there was other people there you could just go off and be like, OK, I'm tired of these guys I want to go talk to someone new and there was always someone else there to talk to, who is willing to talk to you.

- Tina: So you felt like there were people available to talk with when you wanted to talk.
- Miranda: Yeah. Cuz I needed someone to talk to at different times and I, sometimes I'd be like, okay, I just talked to them I think they are probably tired of me or maybe they want some time with other people so I'd be like, okay, I'm going to go talk to someone else. Or maybe I would get tired of them or get mad at them for any reason just not want to talk to them or something I have someone to go find and say I need to talk and they'd be like "okay, sure".
- Tina: Was there any point or moment at camp that just seemed really significant to you?
- Miranda: Not one in particular because there's so many different things that made camp camp.
- Tina: That came together to make it what it was.
- Miranda: Without the different, without the memory boats, camp fire each night, without it it would be like pieces of camp but not the whole feeling of camp.
- Tina: We didn't talk much about camp fire yet. What was your experience with camp fires?
- Miranda: I thought they were pretty cool. I liked how each night they put together different little skits to do and the last night it was really good because we had the whole camp fire because you know we couldn't really light camp fires each night because of the fires everywhere. But the last night we had a fire, a big fire, well a big camp fire and it gave it more of a feeling and it was the night we gave Memory Boats so everyone was still a little upset but that feeling of warmth gave me warmth inside as well as well as out.
- Tina: Wow. I don't have any more specific questions but I'm just real interested in anything that you feel like is significant that I should consider as I pull together my thoughts about camp and pass them on to other people interested.

Miranda: Um. No. I think you did a very good job with camp and I'm really glad I went. It meant a lot for me and it is helping me get through my hard times. It means a lot that you did that for me and all the other campers.

Tina: I really enjoy it, thank you [recording stopped, "a lot of people make it what it is" recording restart] Before we had been talking a little bit about different activities and experiential activities and poetry in particular. And you mentioned that you wrote a poem for your dad that you would be willing to share with me on the tape and I just wanted to invite you to do that when you feel.

Miranda: Okay.
Wake up my dad
Wake up I say
You can't lay around
and sleep all day

I'm sorry she says
Mom looks in my eyes
He's not waking up
so say your good-byes

As they wheel you away
in a long stretcher bed
I think to myself
How could you be dead?

Together we laughed
but now I just cry
You were my hero
and heroes don't die

We loved you a lot,
and I hope that you knew
How much that we cared
and all that we'd do

You made my friends
laugh out loud
And although I never told you so,
it made me very proud

You had a quiet laugh,
and a toothless grin
But if you knew what I would give
to see it all again.

Tina: Through your words even during the interview, you
have such a poetic way, it really helps me get to
know [recording stopped]

GEORGE: CAMPER INTERVIEW 2000

Tina: So we can start with you letting me know about your decision to participate in camp. How did you find out about Bereavement Camp?

George: I went to seasons and (camper name) was in my same group and we were like good friends, we made friends during seasons, and then at the last Seasons there was a big poster and they told us about A Camp to Remember. I wanted to go because (camper name) was going and I wanted to see what it was like.

Tina: So you came to see what it was like and you had a friend?

George: Yeah.

Tina: And when you looked at the poster of camp, what did you image camp was going to be like? What did it look like?

George: I didn't really know. I thought it would be really fun.

Tina: Had you been to summer camp before?

George: No.

Tina: So it was kind of a big first time experience.

George: Yeah.

Tina: So you had a friend and decided to go to camp. So when you got there, how did you spend your day? What kind of things did you do?

George: Right when I got there I signed in and I went to my cabin and sat down then I started to read and everyone got there and I just decided to go outside to walk around to see where everyone was and what it was like.

Tina: And what was it like? What was a day like at camp.

George: It was pretty fun we went swimming and it was fun.

Tina: I mentioned to campers that because I was camp it might be hard to describe things to me because I know what the swimming area was like for me. When you say it was fun there was swimming and stuff, what was swimming like for you?

George: I liked it because my dad used to always take us to the lake to Seeley and we would stay in the lake because it didn't have a lot of seaweed, well it did but you couldn't feel it, and it didn't have the under-tides and it was smoother and you had more space to go skiing and stuff but then we started to go to Salmon lake and it was always a lot smoother. And at Seeley Lake one of my dad's friends had a cabin down there, and it was kind of a bad cabin but not really because it didn't have a lot of rooms it was kind of small. It had a total of three rooms, one big room and two bedrooms. Then we started going to Salmon Lake and one of me dad's friends built a big cabin up there. It was like a huge cabin so we would always be able to go to Salmon Lake and we would just stay there if we wanted to stay the night. We had a dock to park the boat and it was pretty fun.

Tina: So you have a lot of special memories of times with your dad on lakes?

George: Yeah. We went to Flathead lake once with his parents but the water was really cold there and really choppy and you couldn't ski because it was so ruff so we left and went to Lake Placid. And we went there and it was kind of like Seeley Lake but bigger and we had a cabin up there. My dad was the coach for the softball team so my sister and the whole team got to go up to the cabin so my dad brought the boat and he took everyone innertubing and skiing and knee-boarding. And they had like rafts and stuff and it was fun.

Tina: You had a lot of fun and a lot of experiences in the water. So swimming really stands out in your mind about camp?

George: Yeah, and then we also before we went to camp, after my dad died we went to Disney World. We got to swim in the Gulf of Mexico. But the water tasted really really yucky. And we had a boat raft and we would leave the oars on the beach and we would just go out in the raft and till there was a big wave and the wave would push you all the way to land. It was fun. But you had to put your feet out to stop because all the shells and stuff would cut the innertube.

Tina: So you are kind of a water guy? So tell me a story about the water at camp.

George: I was used to it because when we were at Seeley we would always drive through the river. But I hated it in there because it had too much seaweed and I would have to stick my legs up because I could feel it on my feet and I always thought it was a fish. And then at the end of the river there was a dam with a waterfall and I always wanted to go down it but we couldn't because it was a dam. When we took out neighbor's skiing and it was really wide but when you go skiing you have to be careful of how far you went out by the dam because there was a big rock that would stick out of the water. So I have been in the water a lot.

Tina: What did you do in the water with your dad?

George: I liked to go skiing and I tried to go solemn skiing but I couldn't. I would get my foot out of one and then when I tried to get in the other ski I would always tip over and I figured out that I was on the wrong side of the wake. I was on the right side and I was supposed to be on the left side so I wouldn't tip over. And then I actually got my foot there but it was so far back that I couldn't do it and I was going back and forth and finally I just tipped over then there were some kid's skis that we had and the were tied together so your feet wouldn't go too far apart. They were white and the rope that you hold onto was attached to the ski but my dad didn't like it and they weren't even our skis so my dad just untied

it. I didn't like to jump out because I would either go upside down and the skis would pop straight up so I would just dive out of the skis into the water. Then I would float back up, I would just let go of the rope and go over by the wake and just dive. It was fun.

Tina: You are pretty comfortable in the water?

George: Yeah, then my dad would like to go bare-footing and I tried it and he has these barefoot shoes that are wide that you stick your feet in. They are kind of like miniature skis but they teach you how to barefoot and you have a barefoot bar. You would use that for learning how to ski or knee-board. It was about that long and I tried it and it was fun but I never tried it without the shoes. Because if you put your toe down it would suck your leg back and you can't get your foot in front of you. So you have to keep your feet in front of you. But it was fun.

Tina: Sounds like you learned a lot from your dad.

George: Yeah and then we went innertubing there was a big innertube and there was a gully that we could go into and my dad was pulling me on the innertube and he went around and turned so fast that the rope got all caught up. So he told me to hold on and I said why and then he went so fast that it yanked the innertube and it pulled my arms and I almost flew off but it was fun. And they had this jet-ski thing but it is a blow up one and you can have two to three people on there and it has handles to hold onto but I didn't like that because whenever you would go over the wake you would always tip over. My favorite thing was knee-boarding. Finally we went over to Costco and we bought a knee-board that was white. My favorite thing to do is knee-boarding because we could go out with three people on knee-boards and you could battle, by trying to knock the other person off their knee-board and it is fun. You can spray the person and try to knock them over but I tried to battle and I did it with my dad and our knee-boards got locked together and we couldn't get apart and I almost fell over when I

got off of him but it was fun. Then I went out with his friend who gave us the black one and we were spraying each other and running into each other and finally I hit him and he let go of the rope and he grabbed my life jacket and pulled me and I had to let go.

Tina: You have so many different stories about all these adventures that you had with your dad in the water. Do you still spend a lot of time?

George: We haven't been able to go to the water because we are trying to sell our boat because no one can drive it. My mom doesn't want to. And my sister hates driving it. But I liked our boat because it was in a water sport championship so it was used in one of the races to pull championship skiers or something and then my dad bought it. We used to have an old boat that was shiny purple, but our new one had an open front. We named it purple people eater because it was purple. My dad would take me out early in the morning when it was all sunny and he would lay down on the back of the boat and he would let me lay down on the front of the boat and we would go into the lily pads. It was really fun. I like knee-boarding a lot though because my dad bought it and I am just really good at it. It is probably what I am best at. I am good at skiing but you can't get off the water unless you jump and then you would fall.

Tina: And it is nice to do things that you are good at.

George: My dad is good at knee-boarding too, if you go out far enough and then go out over the wake you can usually get really high off the water. My dad can get really high because he has knee-boarded for a long time. He is really good. If he flips the fins down he can spin around and go backwards and his friend Terry could do it really slowly and he was able to stand up but he fell. I really like knee-boarding.

Tina: You didn't get to knee-board at camp but what kind of things did you get to do in the water there? What kind of things did you do?

George: I went canoeing, and I swam and sometimes I just floated. I like canoeing I always went with Bob(camper's name) and Kurt(camper's name).

Tina: What other kinds of things did you do during the day at camp?

George: I was usually with Randy (camper's name), Sonny (camper's name) and J.J. (camper's name). You know that big log that was in front of the cabin? We made up a game like king of the log and you try to push each other off. We did that a lot. And it started because I pushed Sonny off, then we pushed each other off and we made up a little game. The object is to push someone off then they can get right back on but you have to really quickly try to get back on because if you are the last one on then you win. Then you start a new game. The last day we had a little championship and I pushed everyone off and I won. Later we put the boxers on the flagpole. It was fun.

Tina: Tell me about the boxers on the flagpole.

George: It was during the fire. We ran off and we got Sonny's boxers so we quickly ran back and put them on the flagpole and then Mark said to come. So, we quickly ran it up and we pretended we were climbing it, but he noticed and found out. It was fun. Then there was one time when we went behind all the cabins, there was a bird's nest and we looked up there and we thought it was three baby birds. But it was a baby and two big birds. So J.J. climbed up and was looking in there and right when I got my foot and hands on the baby bird hops out and the two big birds fly out and they scared us and we both fell down. Then they flew off so we looked around and we saw the baby. I took a step forwards and looked at it then the robin started flying at my head so I ran off. J.J. was like, "What?" then he turned around and all he could see was this big bird head screaming at them and these wings flapping we ran off we came back and we were getting stalked by birds. Then J.J. went in the bathroom and a bat flew over his head.

- Tina: What do you think was going on with the birds?
- George: I don't know. We just looked in there because earlier Sonny looked in there and we thought it was three babies because we just saw three beaks poking up. So then we looked in there I think it saw J.J.'s face and they all flew out and they got mad at us. We saw the baby bird a couple of times and it was hopping around and then the dad was in the tree and it flew at me. Then it flew to one tree and then it flew after J.J. and Randy. Then it landed on the tree then it pooped right on Randy's shoulder. And he was like, "Ah dang it I'm going to kill that bird, he pooped on my nice shirt." He got all mad at it. Then we threw raisins around and they would just stop and look at us. They were stalking us, it was freaky.
- Tina: How come, do you think, the birds were interested in you?
- George: I don't know? I think they thought we might hurt their baby, but we just wanted to see what it was.
- Tina: They were protecting the little one or something?
- George: Yeah, but we weren't going to do anything, we were just going to look but they got all mad. There were only three and two grownups but then all of a sudden there was like five. There was a woodpecker and a bunch of robins it was freaky. Then Axil (camper name) asked what we were doing and we said nothing just getting stalked by robins. Then he asked if he could come and we said sure.
- Tina: How was that for you to have a younger camper want to be with you?
- George: It was really fun. On my street there is a little six-year-old who always wants to come down and play so I am used to it.
- Tina: What kinds of things at camp did you enjoy the most?

George: I don't know, when J.J., Randy and I sat on the log and just talked. We would just sit there. It was my favorite part. It was fun.

Tina: Yeah, What were your least favorite parts of camp?

George: Getting in the fight.

Tina: Tell me about the fight.

George: I was reading the door and all of a sudden he got mad at me. If my big sister were there she would have been able to tell you that I get mad really easily for some reason. If you start saying bad stuff about me or my family I just all of a sudden snap and get really mad. I just got mad I guess. My mom wants us to just walk away so I got off my bunk to walk away and he pushed me down so he was stepping on me. I wasn't trying to fight I was just defending myself, like I told my mom. I really didn't want to fight but I was just defending myself. At school we don't get in fights we just pretend. We pretend to punch each other and stuff. One time in second grade we were on the playground we got in a pretend fight but we never actually hurt each other, we are just pretending.

Tina: So this was different?

George: Yeah, this was the first time I ever got in a real fight. No the second time because one time in first grade there was one kid who was mean to everybody and I walked out from lunch and all of a sudden he started beating me up.

Tina: So, at camp that sounds big. What kinds of feelings were going on for you? At first you said you were really angry, but what other feelings came out of that?

George: I was just mad because he was saying all that bad stuff about me. He said I am a dork and stuff. It just made me mad. At home, we just joke around; we jump on each other and stuff. Same as like at school, we never actually hurt each other we just

joke around. Like on the couch, one of us will be sitting down and we have to push the other one of the couch or something like that. Then we have a game we made up on the couch. (My sisters) are up standing on the very top of the couch. One will be on the ground and we pretend they are the cheetah and that person jumps up to try to grab the other person and pull them down but they can kick their foot and try to get you away and stuff. It was fun.

Tina: So you have had a lot of different games in your life where you are goofing around with people or even pushing each other around but it is always in fun or no one got hurt but this time you got hurt. What came out of that for you?

George: I never actually wanted to hurt him. I was pretty bummed that I did because I didn't want to because we were friends and all of a sudden he just got mad at me. I didn't want to hurt him.

Tina: Did you learn anything from that? What happened after that?

George: I don't really remember. We were friends again. I think it was the last day or the day before the last day so we really didn't talk to each other very much. It was fun at camp except for that part, which was my least favorite part.

Tina: That was a low point. A lot of fun things and some special things and a low point. Are there other things you enjoyed the least about camp?

George: Not really.

Tina: It is kind of hard to describe camp to someone who has never been there. They don't know what it looks like or the kind of things that you do. How would you describe A Camp to Remember? What is it?

George: It is like a grieving camp. In the groups and stuff you talk about who died in your family and stuff like that. And I think it is a place where you talk and if you are sad you can talk to

someone. There is always someone there you can talk to. It is somewhere to let your feelings out. But when I got there after I made friends with Sonny I started hanging out with Randy and J.J. and they told me what happens and everything. One of my favorite parts was at night when we were sleeping. J.J. and me would stay up and talk and joke around and stuff. We would always go into Randy's cabin. And we would get in his bunk or in Sonny's bunk and we would look out and we would see everything. One time we were in Randy's bunk and he told us these funny jokes and stuff. We just had fun. Then sometimes we would go around stalking people with the cameras. Axil wanted to be stalked so we said okay. So Randy charged it up, and he took out the battery because it makes you finger tingly and it shocks you. And it hurts really badly. So, right before he took out the battery he stuck his finger on there and he got a hole in his finger and there was smoke and he was like, "Whoa that was cool. Can I do it again?" We said we needed to take out the battery. And we thought he was brave. We told him to wait because we had to take out the battery or else it hurts and so we took off the charger to charge it and all of a sudden he sticks his finger on there.

Tina: So you are going around really hurting people at camp?

George: No, it doesn't hurt it just makes you finger really tingly. We would ask them if they wanted to get shocked and we said it just makes you finger tingly. It almost feels like when your hand falls asleep and it gets all tingly.

Tina: But tingly doesn't usually make a hole and smoke.

George: No, it was just because we left the battery in. That was the only time because he didn't wait and with the battery in it is really powerful and it hurts but we would always take the battery out so it makes your finger tingly and it feels like it fell asleep. One time I was trying to charge J.J.'s. I had the charger in this hand and his green hand popped out so we had to take the

battery and put it in. But I took it and I was going to put the battery in and it shocked both of my hands. It went all the way up my arms and my whole arms got tingly and it felt like they fell asleep and then after a few seconds they felt ok but I could still feel it kind of.

Tina: Did your counselors know about it?

George: Yeah, we shocked (one of the male counselors). No I think it was someone else in a different cabin. I was going to charge it but that was when my fingers got all tingly and he said that maybe he didn't want to do it. But I like doing that it was fun. And then we were going to see if people were liars so we walked around asking if they had seen Jurassic Park three because there isn't one. If they said there was then we knew they were liars. One kid said oh yes I love that movie that movie rocks. We were like there isn't one we just said that and he goes oh, I knew that.

Tina: I wonder how that was for him.

George: Everyone else knew there wasn't one but there were some people who were like, " There's a Jurassic Park 3?" And we said no we are just seeing if people are liars. I think he was the only kid.

Tina: Sounds like you formed a pretty tight group with that small group of guys. But you did some things as a group to maybe separate yourself from camp a little bit by being the ones that were doing the shocking or seeing if other people were liars.

George: No, I don't really think so.

Tina: No, not so much.

George: No we still talked to people and stuff like that but we would always . . . [tape cut off]

Tina: How did you meet new people at camp?

George: I don't know, I just said hey to Sonny and all of a sudden we were friends. And, that's when we

went over and J.J. and Randy were on the log and we were friends. And then he was like, " Hey do you want to be shocked." And I asked if it hurt and he said no, your finger just gets all tingly. So I tried it. My finger got really tingly. Then after you do it so many times and you know what is going to happen, it doesn't hurt as bad. But if you put your thumb on there then it hurt worse than your finger if you stick two fingers on there then it blows your hand back.

Tina: And you have all been through things in you life where it really hurt, even if you can't see it.

George: Yeah.

Tina: So how do you think a camp can be helpful for kids who had someone in their family die?

George: Probably because they always have someone to talk to and they can express their feelings and in the little groups you always talk about things and there is always someone to talk to. So if you need to talk you can always go talk to one of the counselors.

Tina: Just having someone who is always available is helpful? How were the small groups for you?

George: I liked them, they were fun because there was a bunch of different things we did. I think Sonny was in my group but I am not sure. No, he wasn't it was Carey who was in my group and he was in my cabin. Axil was in my group too. One thing that some of the people in my cabin didn't like was that Axil would talk and he is always talking constantly and then he would talk at night and make a lot of noise and kick the wall and stuff. J.J. and me were like, "Ok. Axil tonight you can't talk ok, if you don't then tomorrow we will do a bunch of stuff if you just let us sleep, ok. At night we were like Axil remember, don't talk and he goes ok. Then when everyone was about to go to sleep he started making all the noises again. After we fell asleep we didn't hear anything.

Tina: So one thing you think is helpful is just that there is always someone available if somebody wants to talk. And the small groups were helpful. What were the small groups like?

George: You would go to a certain place and then one by one you would talk about what it was like, what happened, how the person died.

Tina: Did you have to talk?

George: Not if you didn't want to I don't think but they really wanted you to. Like Carey, he didn't want to talk but they said he should so he did. And so everyone told how everyone died and what he or she felt like.

Tina: How was that for you?

George: Well I have to tell people how my dad died a lot because people don't know. But I am used to it because I have to tell people what happened a lot because I had to do it when my dad died. And when I got in a fight after camp and everyone asked me what it was like when I got hit by the car and I had to say that a lot to. But, I am used to getting hurt because sometimes when I am skiing or something I would hit the water pretty hard. And then sometimes when I was a kid I would ride my bike and I fell a lot. And my dad set out all these paper plates on the road and me and my sister would have to go like this through them and my dad took me in and he had to put like fifteen Band-Aids on me because I fell and I got all cut up.

Tina: You were going through the paper plates?

George: Well, he set them so far apart so you would have to go on the left of one then on the right of one and so on.

Tina: And you are on foot?

George: No on our bikes. He just bought me a Mickey Mouse bike and my sister had her bike. I took my training wheels off so we were going back and

forth and I crashed. And then I was like hey dad look my bike can stay up without anyone else on it then I would push it and it would stay up then fall over.

Tina: So you have been hurt a number of times, and explained it to people.

George: Yeah and my little sister had this trike and my mom ran over it and bent the wheel but nothing else happened and you couldn't buy a wheel for a trike. So that bike was broken and then my Mickey Mouse bike that I left in the driveway my mom also ran over that. So if I needed something from it I would climb up in the garage and get it from the shelves that were way back.

Tina: So you feel like the small groups were helpful for people but you felt like they were told they should talk?

George: Yeah, they wanted them to but they didn't have to if they didn't want to.

Tina: They, being the other group people or the counselors.

George: Yeah, the other people in the group like those who had someone die in their family. The counselors wanted to talk. They didn't care if they talked.

Tina: If you were in charge of the camp, what would you do the same and what would you do different?

George: I don't know. I probably make it cement instead of having all that dirt. So if the kids wanted to bring a skateboard or roller blades they could do that. I would move the volleyball court and cut down the trees to make a big sand area. I would have a basketball court or something and a bike course or something. But I have gone through a lot of bikes because I had a little bike that I used for my sisters and I had a different bike that I bought for 25 cents at our own garage sale but it was a pink bike that was still good. I had a Mickey Mouse bike and then for 35 dollars a kid

sold his bike because a car hit him on his bike. So my mom bought it and it was a mountain bike and my dad fixed it all up. Then that got ruined when I got hit by the car, so I got a new bike and that is the best bike I have ever had because it has an easy adjustable seat that you can move up or down. And it has fatter tires and shocks and a cushioned seat. My grandpa bought me roller blades; hockey ones and my dad bought me pads for a hundred dollars so the total was two hundred dollars. So my dad said I had to take really good care of them. But the fourth day I went into someone's driveway and I slipped and made a huge skid mark so I hurried up to the house and I said Dad, Dad I just made a huge skid mark on my roller blades. And he said good, do they still work and I said I was going to go do it again. So he always liked stuff like that.

Tina: It sounds like you are kind of hard on equipment. But if you were in charge of camp you would move the volleyball stuff and you would add some more physical sorts of things.

George: And I wanted to add a snowboarding area, but I couldn't it would have to be winter. Because my dad would always go skiing and I wanted to learn how to ski so he took me skiing and then. You know on Discovery the black diamond it is the hardest. And went hey dad, where is the shorter ski area that you always take and he said it was just down there so I went down there and it said the black diamond and then there was another course and you were supposed to go down and I didn't see it and it didn't look right so I went down and I broke my ski. It was already kind of broken but I totally broke it. So my dad saw me and he was like, oh god so I was trying to get down. Then my dad came down and he took my skis and told me to walk down, he got kind of mad at me. So I went on the black diamond. Then my skis didn't work so my mom bought me a snowboard instead and I like snowboarding better because I am better at it. Because both of your feet are in the same thing and they don't fly apart. So she bought me one. We have a park and it has a huge hill so I would always go snowboarding down that.

And my mom said you really like snowboarding don't you and I said yeah. So she signed me up for lessons at Marshall Mountain. We went down the bunny hill the first couple of times then we finally got to go up on the big hills and we went down a little trail. And if you fall off the side at Marshall you have to stay there until people come get you. So I jumped down and ate some fresh clean snow and then I crawled back up and people were like hey get out of there you could get hurt and fall. But I said no because my board was stuck in the snow so I wouldn't fall. So I climbed back up. Then we went down the face so I went down there were there was a half pipe. So on the last day I went really fast down it and I tried to stop at the end of the hill and I almost ran into the lodge.

Tina: You had to slam on your brakes. So if you were going to make camp ideal you would like to do activities that remind you of things you wanted to do with your dad or used to do with your dad?

George: Yeah.

Tina: That is one reason you liked water play and you would like to add the skiing and snowboarding. It would be helpful to hear different things that kids did with the person that they lost in their family, that used to be important to them so that we could maybe do it at camp. Are there other things about camp that you would change, do the same, make sure we keep or don't keep?

George: I liked (name) the cook, he was cool and he made good food. And I would leave the logs because it was my favorite part.

Tina: It was a special place for you to gather with your friends.

George: I would make the cabins bigger so you have more room to put your stuff and I would make it so you could ski on the water and make the area bigger so you could hike up the mountain if you wanted.

Tina: Did you hike at camp?

George: No, I was going to sign up but I didn't.

Tina: I had a last question for you. You mentioned how it was important to you to have staff available to you when you are going through tough stuff and when you are a Bereavement Camp. Then you talked about the low point of camp for you was the fight. How did staff respond to the fight? How did you feel staff responded to that?

George: They talked to me and told me I shouldn't and what to do if it ever happens again. I think it was (counselor name) who was really nice he talked to me and they said what I should or shouldn't do if that ever happens again. It was really fun to have all the counselors to talk to if I was sad or something and they would always be there. And to have a nice counselor to joke around to and be funny. That was the nice part about counselors. They would be funny in the day but at night if you were loud they would be strict and stuff.

Tina: So you liked the funny, joking around daytime?

George: Yeah.

Tina: Well that is all my questions for you. Is there anything else I should consider or know about camp? Or what could be helpful at camp for kids who had someone in their family die?

George: No.

Tina: Well if you think of anything else you can always call me. I remember my perception after you and Carey fought we all spent some time talking about what was going to happen and if you all were going to stay at camp. Do you remember this or did you not remember talking at all after the fight?

George: I don't really think we talked at all, we did but we really didn't talk. We said we were sorry and stuff. And when we made the memory boats we were walking down to the dock to go sit in the sand

and his sister kicked me for no reason. Then he came over and said don't be mean to my sister and I said we weren't. He said that she said someone bumped her and she got mad. She said it was one of us. Then I told him what happened.

Tina: So it sounds like that didn't really get resolved. Did you learn anything from it about how you handled it or your role in it?

George: Yeah.

Tina: What was your role in it?

George: I don't really know that but I know that I am not supposed to do stuff like that and I never have. If I ever did then I know I don't want to beat anyone up. If they beat me up I will hit them to defend myself. But if someone just punches me I will just give him or her a punch on the shoulder back. It is really only the second time I have ever gotten into an actual fight. The first time he just started beating me up.

Tina: What do you think should happen at camp with people who get in fights? Should they stay at camp or should they go home?

George: If for no reason the other person starts beating someone up then the person started it should go home. But if someone started it because someone else did something then they should talk it out to decide if they want to go home or if they want to stay.

Tina: What could camp have done better?

George: I don't know, I don't really know.

Tina: Because things like that may happen again and you were involved so if you had insights to what was helpful and how camp responded and what wasn't helpful that would be good to hear.

George: I think camp responded by having all the counselors tell us we shouldn't do it again and we should not do stuff that might start a fight.

And tell other counselors if we think a fight might happen so they can try to stop it. Always have a counselor in the room.

Tina: Thank you. Your input is really helpful.

BRITTANY: CAMPER INTERVIEW 2000

Tina: The first thing I'd like to hear is how did you find out about Bereavement Camp?

Brittany: Seasons.

Tina: Okay, so how did you find out at Seasons.

Brittany: Vicki, the counselor, told my mom.

Tina: So when you heard that a Bereavement Camp was going to happen, what did you think that would be like?

Brittany: Fun.

Tina: You thought that it was going to be fun?

Brittany: Yes.

Tina: What kind of fun things did you think were going to happen at camp?

Brittany: Swimming.

Tina: Swimming, said with a big smile.

Brittany: And canoeing. And games.

Tina: You like that stuff, swimming and canoeing and games? And those kinds of things did happen.

Brittany: Yes

Tina: So, tell me, everybody signed up for different things at camp, and during the day, you would just participate in different kinds of activities some are choices and some aren't. What kind of things did you do while you were at camp?

Brittany: I took a spa.

Tina: What was the spa?

Brittany: It was a place where you painted your fingernails, and got a foot massage and that was the most fun.

Tina: Really. What did you like about it?

Brittany: Everything.

Tina: You painted you fingernails and got a foot massage?

Brittany: And I did swimming and challenge games and the hike, those were fun too.

Tina: Ok. What were the challenge games?

Brittany: You went through a maze with a blindfold and you went with a partner and they had to guide you through it to tell you to go left or right.

Tina: How did that go for you?

Brittany: Good.

Tina: Is that something you would do again?

Brittany: Yes.

Tina: What did you like about it?

Brittany: It was funny being blindfolded.

Tina: Being blindfolded and going through without being able to see?

Brittany: Yes.

Tina: Wow, How did you get through it without being able to see?

Brittany: I listened.

Tina: Ok. Listening to the suggestions that you partner has?

Brittany: Yep.

Tina: What was the goal of that?

Brittany: To try to get through, and listen to your partner.

Tina: And you mentioned hiking too. What was the hike?

Brittany: It was around the forest, we just went through the trees, that was kind of fun.

Tina: It was fun to go through the trees?

Brittany: And to walk.

Tina: Was that with a big group of people or just a few people or who hiked?

Brittany: Seven or eight people and three counselors.

Tina: So you all just decided to go on a hike? Did you end up anywhere in particular?

Brittany: No.

Tina: You just hiked through the forest.

Brittany: Yep.

Tina: I think you mentioned something else you did. Challenge games, hike, and spa . . .

Brittany: Swimming.

Tina: What is swimming like at camp?

Brittany: It's the most fun ever and it's cold and it's hot outside and that felt good.

Tina: Oh, so because of the heat, being able to dive into the cold water felt good?

Brittany: Uh-huh.

Tina: I see. What is the area like that you swim in, can you describe it?

Brittany: It's a dock, and then another dock, and a rope on the other side of the dock, and that's where you have to stay unless you go out with a counselor. You can go out of the rope and behind the dock.

Tina: What did you find yourself liking?

Brittany: I don't know, having fun.

Tina: Having fun. So, anything else you did during the day at camp that comes to mind for you?

Brittany: Treasure Hunt.

Tina: Tell me about that. I wasn't at the treasure hunt.

Brittany: It was . . . the first clue the person with the longest hair or the person with the biggest feet had to read the clue. Then we got the clue and we went onto the next thing and the and the last one ended up in the water and everyone jumped in with their clothes on.

Tina: How come they ended up in the water?

Brittany: Because that's where the clue was.

Tina: Oh, so to get that clue you had to get wet.

Brittany: Yes, well mostly we were just looking for it in the water, I don't know if it was in the water, it was probably on the dock but everyone wanted to go in the water, and then she let us swim.

Tina: So you aren't even quite sure where the clue was?

Brittany: I think it was on the dock.

Tina: Was that the end of the treasure hunt then?

Brittany: Yeah, then we got candy.

Tina: So, during camp you did all those fun things. Any thing else that you did during the day?

Brittany: Yeah ate.

Tina: Tell me about that. How was that?

Brittany: It was good and the food was good. It gave me more energy.

Tina: You got more energy from that?

Brittany: Yeah.

Tina: So what kind of food did you like to eat at camp?

Brittany: Cheeseburgers are my favorite.

Tina: The cook was quite a cheeseburger cooker, wasn't he?

Brittany: Yeah.

Tina: You did a lot of different things at camp it sounds like.

Brittany: Uh-huh.

Tina: Of those different things, what did you enjoy the most?

Brittany: Swimming.

Tina: How about the least, what were your least favorite things at camp?

Brittany: The hike cause it was kind of boring but it was kind of fun.

Tina: So the hike was your least favorite thing because it was kind of boring and kind of fun. Do you have more to say about that? Swimming was your favorite and hiking was your least favorite?

Brittany: Yeah, because I am not a big walker.

Tina: Not everyone went on the hike because you said there was only seven or eight people. How did you decide to go on the hike?

Brittany: I don't know. I just didn't want to do the other things then and then I got woodworking but I just got that after swimming and stuff.

Tina: So, did you feel like you had a choice between different activities or did you have to do that?

Brittany: I felt like I had a choice.

Tina: Do you think that matters? Did you like having choice?

Brittany: I really didn't think it mattered. I wouldn't care.

Tina: So you were in which cabin at camp?

Brittany: Ten.

Tina: What was it like to be in cabin ten?

Brittany: Fun and I liked all the girls. The only thing I didn't like was that one of the beds squeaked every time she moved.

Tina: Uh-oh, a squeaky bunk.

Brittany: REALLY squeaky. And I kept on running into the wall but everything else was good.

Tina: Kept on running into the wall? Sounds like there is a story there.

Brittany: Yeah, when I fell asleep I turned that way and I would hit my head on the wall, and I almost fell off my bed. But it was fun.

Tina: So, how did you sleep at camp?

Brittany: Good. Except for one night because the girls were really hyper because we got s'mores and they were yelling and talking but I had a good sleep the rest of the time.

Tina: How was that for you when you had s'mores and everyone was talking?

Brittany: It was annoying.

Tina: What do you wish were different then?

Brittany: That they listened to Ruth, the counselor because then they would be quiet. She told them like twenty times but they didn't listen.

Tina: Sounds like that was annoying for you. So you weren't one of the talking and yelling ones?

Brittany: No, I just told them to be quiet.

Tina: What ideas do you have that would have made that night better?

Brittany: I don't know. Even the counselor from the next cabin came over and told them to be quiet and then they finally started to be quiet and that was good.

Tina: So having someone set some limits was good?

Brittany: Yes.

Tina: I was talking to someone that had never been to camp and they asked me to describe camp. It is hard to do for someone that has never been there. If someone asked you, how would you describe what Bereavement Camp is and what is it like?

Brittany: It's fun, and it is helpful and nice and you get to do a lot of fun stuff and that's all.

Tina: So you said it's fun and you talked about a lot of the fun parts of camp and you said it was helpful. What do you think was helpful about camp for you?

Brittany: The memory boats.

Tina: Tell me about the memory boats.

Brittany: We got a piece of wood and we put things in memory of the person who died on it and we let them go and we lit a candle from the other candle before yours.

Tina: Oh so you light a candle from the other candle that comes right before yours. How was that for you? Were you a part of that?

Brittany: It felt good.

Tina: Can you say more about that?

Brittany: It is kind of hard to describe.

Tina: It is really hard to describe. When you haven't been there it is hard to help someone understand that. How do you think we can help someone understand, who has never been a part of it?

Brittany: I don't know.

Tina: I have an image in my mind, and I bet you do to, of what the whole memory boat thing was like. What feelings were there for you when you did memory boats?

Brittany: Sad and happy.

Tina: Lots of different mixed feelings? How about the feelings around you of the friends or the other campers?

Brittany: It kind of felt weird at first.

Tina: Help me understand that.

Brittany: It was weird because everybody was giving hugs and that wasn't weird but they were just everywhere and it kind of got hot.

Tina: The weather was hot or the hugs were hot?

Brittany: The hugs were hot.

Tina: All the body heat. Did you feel uncomfortable, like people were giving you hugs and you didn't want hugs?

Brittany: No, I felt good. But everybody started laughing when someone lost their shoe and they didn't get it back. That was bad.

Tina: Someone lost their shoe and didn't get it back?

Brittany: Yeah, I think someone fished it out but I don't know.

Tina: So that wasn't good because it was kind of a distraction?

Brittany: Yeah.

Tina: You probably have a lot of stories of things you did at camp or times you had at camp I would love to hear just one story. Tell me a story about you at camp.

Brittany: Well, once when we were going to the bathroom, me and everyone else in our cabin. We were walking and someone didn't have a flashlight and we thought it was a weird animal and we were scared and everybody was screaming and they woke everyone up.

Tina: So it was the middle of the night.

Brittany: It was like two o' clock in the morning.

Tina: It sounds scary. So you were walking along and it is a person walking but they don't have a flashlight and you thought it was an animal?

Brittany: Yeah, because the night before that I saw a mountain lion out there. And it was scary and I was like, " oh my gosh what is this."

Tina: So you all screamed and then what?

Brittany: We went who is this? What is this? And they were like it's me; it's a person.

Tina: How was that?

Brittany: I was relieved.

Tina: Were there other times you felt relieved at camp from different things that happened or that you participated in?

Brittany: Yeah.

Tina: After being so scared I bet you were glad it was a person.

Brittany: Yeah and it was Sarah too.

Tina: You were describing things that were fun and something that was helpful was the memory boats. Were there other things about camp that were helpful for you?

Brittany: Yeah, the memory trail.

Tina: What was the memory trail like?

Brittany: We picked out some stuff, like a pine cone or a weird shape piece of bark or something and we put it somewhere where it was a cool spot and that felt good because my dad always liked the water and I put it right by the water.

Tina: So you picked out something special and put it right by the water because your dad liked water. What was it that you picked out?

Brittany: I picked out this thing that was bark and it was a weird shaped curvy thing. And it kind of looked like a person so I put it by the water.

Tina: A wooden shape?

Brittany: Yeah.

Tina: How was that for you?

Brittany: Good and it was kind of fun except when I stepped on a pokey leaf, that hurt because it got stuck in my foot.

Tina: Ouch.

Brittany: And then it started bleeding so I had to go to nurse Rachel.

Tina: So it was kind of fun until you stepped on a pokey leaf that caused your foot to bleed?

Brittany: Yeah.

Tina: So you went to nurse Rachel?

Brittany: Yep.

Tina: And?

Brittany: She put a Band-Aid on.

Tina: How is your foot doing now?

Brittany: Good.

Tina: Other things that were helpful?

Brittany: Everything because I usually am bored and it really isn't fun and it was helpful to go somewhere that was fun.

Tina: When you say it is usually not fun, was that the case before your dad died or that's how you have been feeling since your dad died?

Brittany: Since my dad died. And when school is done I am really bored because there is really nothing to do because I play with all my friends and then I turn on the TV and that gets boring after awhile.

Tina: And camp wasn't boring?

Brittany: No and whenever my friend comes over, all she wants to do is play Nintendo and that is boring I don't like it.

Tina: It sounds like it was really helpful for you to be around the water where you could find a special place to honor your dad on the memory trail near the water. And the memory boats sounded important to you.

Brittany: Yeah.

Tina: Sounds like you kind of like being outside?

Brittany: Yeah I like the water a lot whenever I get a chance to go, I go.

Tina: So, We talked about some ways the camp was fun and the camp was helpful to you. Some people wonder, what is this Bereavement Camp? How do you think a Bereavement Camp could be helpful to someone who has had someone in his or her family die?

Brittany: Because it helps you get all your feelings out when you talk about it and it feels good to just get it all out.

Tina: What ways does it help you get your feelings out?

Brittany: Because people let you talk to them and it is helpful because everyone around you has someone who has died and everybody, like most of the people in my cabin, it was like a brother or a sister or a dad or a mom. It wasn't like a grandpa or a grandma or someone. And that was helpful too because I felt closer to them and it was just better to know that everyone else around you has the same feelings.

Tina: Just being around other people helps?

Brittany: Yeah.

Tina: If you were in charge of the camp what would you make sure you did the same, and what would you do differently?

Brittany: I would do everything the same, it was a lot of fun and I thought it was perfect.

Tina: It is really helpful to hear your feedback because I can know my thoughts about it as an adult, or I can hear staff's feedback as adults. But you, as the campers, are the ones that know what it is like for a camper. So thank you so much for meeting today and sharing your thoughts,

Is there anything else I should know or think about as I try to make camp helpful for young people who had someone die in their family.

Brittany: Nope.

MANDY: CAMPER INTERVIEW 2000

Tina: How long have you been going to camp?

Mandy: Two years.

Tina: How did you find out about camp?

Mandy: My mom said there is a camp you might interested in and I said yes cool.

Tina: Well what did you think it would be like?

Mandy: I had watched a movie about a camp so I thought it might be like that.

Tina: What did the movie say day camps were like?

Mandy: Well there were a lot of games and friends and food and swimming.

Tina: And what kind of things did you do at camp?

Mandy: There were games. My favorite one was the spot. It wasn't exactly a game but I really liked that one. And well there is a bunch of stuff you could put your feet and it would massage your things and they had like a bunch of lotion and stuff you put on your face like masks and nail polish.

Tina: And that was one of your favorites?

Mandy: I liked Jelly Bellies eating . . . Bellies.

Tina: What other kinds of things did you do?

Mandy: I signed up for fishing so I could go swimming during fishing I love swimming I love everything in the world and I did challenge games and fishing and swimming and fishing.

Tina: What are challenge games?

Mandy: Well they are games were you like pick a buddy. Um you guide them through an obstacle course that has all these things you can't touch them. If

somebody gets stuck you have to touch him or her its fun.

Tina: I can't hear you.

Mandy: Yeah they are blindfolded and running around in a circle. Just yelling go right or left or back or forth or something.

Tina: Oh, and how was that for you.

Mandy: I liked being blindfolded.

Tina: How was it for you to work with your buddies?

Mandy: Well, it was kind of hard because I didn't really know her voice a lot so I took advice from other people a lot. So I ran into a couple of things.

Tina: And the goal was . . .

Mandy: To get to the other side and save as many people as you could.

Tina: So spa, challenge games, and you signed up for fishing but you went swimming instead. How was swimming?

Mandy: Well, I liked the dock a lot better here than at Georgetown, and oh, another thing I didn't tell you I am going to someone's birthday party and it was going to be at lake Como but it is closed so we are going to Seeley Lake by where the cabins are to do it. She is going to rent a water trampoline and we are going to put it in the lake and bounce. It will be fun.

Tina: You really like water?

Mandy: I really like water, I was born in water too.

Tina: You were born in water?

Mandy: Yep.

Tina: If I were trying to imagine what camp was like, what would you describe it like?

- Mandy: Swimming, swimming, swimming and swimming.
- Tina: That's what you liked the most.
- Mandy: Water makes me feel really good.
- Tina: Say more about that.
- Mandy: I like being in water, especially cold water. I can really swim for hours and hours and not get tired. I don't know why. I just like cold water. Cold water doesn't really make me cold. I am immune to it.
- Tina: What did you enjoy the least about camp.
- Mandy: Boys. At night when we were trying to have quiet time they would yell and holler. And I didn't like the fight at all. It was really disturbing because we were trying to rest but none of us in the cabin were being really quiet. Then we heard a bunch of cussing from the cabin. What was really funny though, that night we were really hyper and rowdy and we made up the story that we had to go to the bathroom. Because we wanted to get out of the cabin at night. So we asked to go to the bathroom. The night before there had been a mountain lion in the cabin so we were kind of scared. So all the girls in the cabin except for Hanna because she was sleeping, we didn't want to walk there so we ran and screamed all the way to the bathroom and all the way back. We saw some of the lights turn on in the cabin. Then we continued to be loud until the light in the cabin next to ours turned on and someone came and told us to be quiet. That was funny.
- Tina: How was that for you? It was funny?
- Mandy: I think it was fun, and Vicki slept through most of it. Ruth, who has the unfortunate position of being right underneath me did not get much sleep that night.
- Tina: Sounds like you were scared that night?

Mandy: And fun, and loud and bad.

Tina: Because you did something you weren't supposed to do?

Mandy: Yeah, and we were really hyper. The cook was awesome.

Tina: What did you like about the cook?

Mandy: He's cool looking. He cooks good food too. I really like him because he interacts with us.

Tina: You think it is important that the staff interacts with the campers even if they are in the kitchen or in other jobs?

Mandy: Yeah, definitely.

Tina: You started talking about stuff you liked the least about camp.

Mandy: I didn't like it when Jim threw me in the lake when I told him not to.

Tina: Jim?

Mandy: The kid Jim. Not the counselor. The one who looks buff.

Tina: So you asked him to not throw you in the lake and he threw you in. How did that come about?

Mandy: I almost drowned.

Tina: So what led up to you almost being thrown in the lake?

Mandy: Everyone else was being thrown in the lake and I swam out to the dock and asked him to help me up and when he helped me up he started to pick me up to throw me in and I asked him not to and he did it anyway.

Tina: Oh, I see. So that is one thing you didn't like about camp. That you weren't listened to?

- Mandy: He heard me, because I was hollering at him.
- Tina: What do you think of that?
- Mandy: I think he is kind of mean, well, not mean exactly, but he doesn't really respect other people's feelings. Well, maybe just mine. I liked (counselor's name) a lot.
- Tina: Why did you like (counselor's name)?
- Mandy: He is just really nice, he bought me a camera.
- Tina: So, during the day at camp, different people are doing different things. And different cabins have different stories. Tell me a story about your time at camp.
- Mandy: That is what I have been doing.
- Tina: Do you have other stories?
- Mandy: You know how Anni is really princessy and self-centered. Well I like her a lot, she goes to my school. That is why she got the award for being the princess, because she kind of wants us all to be her slaves. Well, I really like her a lot but this one time I was coming back from taking a shower and I tried to open the door and someone was holding it, so I was like get out of the way. They said what's the password, and I said it's my cabin. Then they said oh well and let me in. Then they said well a lot of your friends have been coming in here. That is what we did last year, everyone came into everyone's cabin. And I thought that was kind of funny. The password was mess. I thought it was kind of dumb too.
- Tina: You thought it was dumb that you had to say the password.
- Mandy: Yeah, but everyone else had to say it too.
- Tina: So how did campers get along in your cabin?

- Mandy: Just the girls usually got along together but they didn't get along with the boys. So we had wars and stuff. I usually try to stay out of it.
- Tina: [undecipherable]
- Mandy: I liked Carey though. He was pretty cool.
- Tina: [undecipherable]
- Mandy: I don't think I would, they wouldn't listen when you talk to them about it.
- Tina: Would you prefer more separation between boys and girls at camp?
- Mandy: No, cause they are kind of fun to tease. I don't want all girls at camp. I like boys, and I hate boys.
- Tina: How was camp for you. It is hard to describe it.
- Mandy: Everyone shares a likeness of losing someone. But I have not been to any other camps.
- Tina: If someone had never been to Bereavement Camp and they asked you what it was like, what would you say?
- Mandy: Fun. I think that going to camps are really good to spend your summer doing. Because you know how you really want something and when it comes it is really boring. When you go to camp it is something fun to do.
- Tina: [undecipherable]
- Mandy: So you always have something to look forward to. Summer, Summer, Summer, A Camp to Remember.
- Tina: How would you describe camp, what do you do, what are people like?
- Mandy: Well, it is pretty surrounding. It has a lot of pretty trees and wild life. And I really don't like the boys trying to kill ground squirrels. But I like when we have snack and you can feed

the squirrels. It doesn't seem as artificial. I like being out in the wilderness. But not alone in the wilderness, I like being alone but not at night. The cabins are also really pretty. My bunch was really squeaky. And usually most people treat you with respect there. Some don't. There usually aren't any physical fights.

Tina: How do people show respect to each other?

Mandy: Well, they are not rude and they respect your needs and what you want and your privacy sometimes.

Tina: If you were in charge of camp, what parts would be the most important?

Mandy: I would have a meeting before camp and try to get all the people who go to camp together and ask the kids what they want to do. Invent things or games. Ask the kids for ideas. If you really ask me though, I would have maybe an hour and a half where you could choose anything at all that you would want to do. Free time, or an activity or something. And you could have a counselor for every group.

Tina: So you would just have a choice for whatever you want to do?

Mandy: Yeah, and I think that the kids should help cook sometimes. Me and Diane were wiping off the tables and we brought the rags back in and someone told us to put them in the big bowl next to the sink and Diane dropped her rag in there without even looking to see what it was. It was maple syrup.

Tina: So all the rags went into a big bowl of maple syrup?

Mandy: No just hers. They had to throw it out though.

Tina: There are a lot of funny stories that come away from camp. How can camp be helpful?

Mandy: I think the kids maybe don't want to say things in front of the other kids because not being able, you might not trust all kids to tell anyone else. It may be hard not to tell anyone else because there is kind of an exciting story behind the kid's parents, relatives who died. I think that you should take your favorite counselor and talk to them about it. I really think that what makes camp fun is that they don't make you say anything and they don't make you talk all the time. You get to do other things too. You don't stick with one thing like your parents dying, but if you need to talk you can talk to somebody. You can also exchange stories in camp. But we got in trouble once. You know how we are not used to those bunks because we always pass notes at quiet time. But the bunks are all spread out so we had to toss them. But the paper is kind of light and it landed on Ruth's head while she was trying to sleep so Diane had to creep over there and get it. So what we did was stick the notes in the ribbons of our bed buddies and then we threw it. So Anni and Brittany started doing it, but they were using the big ones and they were throwing it and it hit (counselor's name) right on the head and it woke her up so we had to stop throwing those because we couldn't get them to each other.

Tina: So you described a lot of ways that the camp could be helpful.

Mandy: Well, everybody when they come to camp they find a little stuffy on their bunk waiting for them. This year we had a big stuffy and a little stuffy but my big one was scary so I gave it away.

Tina: Do you get to pick it out or does someone else.

Mandy: You usually can if someone hasn't already. Well my big one was very scary, my small one was adorable but the big one wasn't. It was big and hard and mean looking it was like a bee-bear kind of thing.

Tina: A bee, bear?

Mandy: It was kind of a bee mixed with a bear.

Tina: You talk about a lot of scary things like going to the bathroom in the middle of the night and the stuffed animals. Did you feel scared at camp?

Mandy: Not usually. But you know how when one person starts to scream then everyone else does too. It's fun.

Tina: So it was more fun than scary?

Mandy: Yeah. The adrenaline kind of made us scream.

Tina: Is there anything else you want to share with me about your experience?

Mandy: That's about it.

JACKIE: CAMPER INTERVIEW 2000

Tina: We can start wherever. I want you to chat with me about your experience with camp. So maybe start with how did you find out about camp?

Jackie: Well (counselor's name), she was a counselor there. She thought it would be fun or something. So she asked me.

Tina: Did you know (counselor's name) at the time?

Jackie: Yeah.

Tina: So when she introduced the idea to you, what were your thoughts about camp?

Jackie: Well I didn't know what it was going to be like, but I thought it was going to be a lot of fun. I have never really been to a camp before. So I thought it would be a lot of fun to just try it out and see.

Tina: What kind of things did you imagine camp would be like?

Jackie: A bunch of activities and stuff, kid's stuff.

Tina: And this camp was a Bereavement camp, did you have any thoughts about how that would be different or the same?

Jackie: No, I didn't.

Tina: So, you have been to camp for how many years now?

Jackie: I've been to a bunch. I have been at all of them, four years.

Tina: Four years. So, tell me about the kinds of things that you have done at camp. You have done a lot of different things. I would just love to hear what kinds of things you've participated in.

Jackie: One of the things I really liked is when we made the llama hair beads. I have always liked the

secret pals thing, that is really fun. And I like canoeing a lot and stuff. I also like talking with counselors and stuff, like a bunch of kids I think that is a lot of fun sitting down and talking about stuff.

Tina: When it is structured or just when it happens.

Jackie: Just when it happens. Both, actually.

Tina: Talking about?

Jackie: Like our parents dying and stuff. It is just nice to get it out and stuff.

Tina: So, just that it can come when it comes up.

Jackie: Yeah.

Tina: So, you have made the beads out of llama hair, and canoed and tell me more about the secret pals. If I had never been to camp, how would you explain it? What do you do?

Jackie: Make things for other people and you get things from other people but you don't know who it is. It is like really fun because you try to guess who it is but you don't know. By what you get and stuff.

Tina: Is your experiences that usually people figure it out?

Jackie: Some people do.

Tina: Some do. So llama beads, secret pals, canoeing. Tell me about canoeing at camp.

Jackie: It is a lot of fun, I like to do the tipping tests. You go out with someone.

Tina: Have you done that every year?

Jackie: No, I didn't do it this year.

Tina: How would you describe the tipping test.

- Jackie: It is just different. It is fun. It might seem scary at first but it is a lot of fun.
- Tina: So you get in the canoe with a person. Does everyone do the tippy-test the same way or is it different?
- Jackie: I don't know, some people might do it differently.
- Tina: Ok. So, you and whoever you were going to go out in the canoe with got in and paddled out a little ways?
- Jackie: Yeah and then you flip over and you get under the canoe and pick it up and then have to flip it over again and climb back in.
- Tina: How did you find how to get back in?
- Jackie: Well, I did it with Molly and we each got on a side and evened out the weight.
- Tina: So it made it possible for a person to get in. That was so fun. I remember the year at Georgetown when we spent all afternoon tipping the canoes over and getting back in. And you said you didn't do it this year.
- Jackie: I just didn't get around to it.
- Tina: Well you described that you have done and some of the things that you described were things that you enjoyed the most. I understood you saying you liked making the beads and you liked some things in the water and you liked having time just to sit down and talk
- Jackie: Yeah. I liked swimming a lot and when you just got in our cabins, like quiet time when they read to us or something. I liked just hanging out.
- Tina: Okay, how about the things you enjoyed the least?
- Jackie: I don't think I have any. Just this year though, during fire time, it seemed like some of the kids were kind of distracted sometimes because there

is a lot of kids. But other nights, just some nights they were other nights it didn't seem quite as bad.

Tina: So how would you describe your ideal fire side?

Jackie: I guess they just got the attention of the kids more and the kids were more concentrating on it and they weren't messing around, not necessarily that they were messing around, just that some were a little distracted.

Tina: There were more people and more distractions?

Jackie: Yeah.

Tina: Can you think of ways to make it better?

Jackie: Maybe like when we sang that song, everyone got into it and we kind of had their attention after the song so that works a lot.

Tina: Having something like a song to bring it together. At camp a lot of people choose different activities to do at different times, you and I were in a cabin together in 1997 but now that you have been back at camp in 98, 99, 2000, so you have so many stories about camp that I would never know. I would love if you would tell me a story about camp, tell me about an experience at camp.

Jackie: Well, this year when Molly was leaving, Leslie got out her guitar and started playing a song for Molly and we all sang, it was a lot of fun.

Tina: So, in your cabin, Leslie had a guitar that no one really knew she had until then. She pulled it out in the cabin. Was it just your cabin?

Jackie: Yeah. She just started playing.

Tina: Wow. What was that like for the cabin?

Jackie: It was surprising at first because we didn't really know, I never knew that she knew how to play guitar and our counselors were really good

singers and so yeah, they were really good singers.

Tina: A lot of talent in that cabin with the counselors and the campers. What song did you sing?

Jackie: I don't know the name.

Tina: Was it one you just learned right then?

Jackie: Yeah, she had just taught it to us right there.

Tina: It sounds like the music is really important to you at camp. You talked about singing at the campfire and also at the cabin.

Jackie: I think it was kind of a country song or something but I don't know.

Tina: Jackie, I have been to camp, you have been to camp. And I was talking with someone the other day about how to describe camp to someone who had never been there. How would you describe Bereavement camp to someone?

Jackie: Well afterwards it is really relieving to get it all out and stuff, I felt a lot better afterwards because I could talk to people about anything I wanted and they would totally understand because they have been through the same thing and it is a lot of fun.

Tina: [undecipherable]

Jackie: Yeah, you feel safe around them.

Tina: What makes the camp feel safe.

Jackie: Just the people.

Tina: To me it definitely seems like there is a lot of magic that happens at camp, people feeling safe, and understood. What I would love to understand as well as possible is, how does camp do that? How can bereavement camp help someone who has had someone in their family die?

Jackie: Just knowing that you are not all by yourself in that situation that other people are there too. You feel more secure about not being left alone in the world.

Tina: Not being left alone in the world with an experience like that. So just the simple fact that everyone that comes to camp has had that experience in itself helps to create the safety.

Jackie: Yeah, and all the age groups it is nice knowing there is more people like you.

Tina: How has it changed for you throughout the camp? How old were you your first year?

Jackie: Nine.

Tina: Now you are thirteen. How was camp for you as a nine year old versus how it was for when you were thirteen?

Jackie: Well when I was littler I just wondered I wasn't quite sure how to act or anything, now I am

Tina: In what ways can camp be helpful for someone who has had someone in their family die?

Jackie: I guess by just talking and getting it all out.

Tina: Is that something that is necessary to have at camp?

Jackie: I think so. Tell people how you feel and get your feelings out instead of just leaving them inside.

Tina: Are there other opportunities in life outside of camp that you feel kids have to get things out.

Jackie: Sometimes, but other places it might be hard and feel uncomfortable. Like I know sometimes I will feel uncomfortable around some people like sometimes if I am not feeling that well around my friends. I feel weird or something and I don't really want them to know how I am feeling but it just helps me. It also helps me learn better how to tell other people how I feel because it comes

out at camp. So I feel more confident doing it myself.

Tina: So you have your stories and experiences you carry around [undecipherable]

Jackie: [undecipherable]

Tina: How they react and bring their experiences out . . .

Jackie: I like hearing how, well knowing how they react, I like to help people when they feel like that. In different ways I can look at it like have they experienced knowing how they react and what helps them with other people. I can help maybe.

Tina: And you like helping others.

Jackie: Yeah.

Tina: It is so helpful to hear your thoughts and reactions about camp because you have been there for so many years. If you were to become the director of camp if you were in charge, what do you think are the important parts of the program? What kind of activities would you make sure you had?

Jackie: The dream boats, to make a boat for someone. You talk about that.

Tina: It would be helpful to hear how you would describe that.

Jackie: Just putting on what you feel on the boat letting it out into the lake.

Tina: What was your process of making the boats?

Jackie: We all went together out into the forest, we found a trail and we went out and looked for pieces of wood together and we just got thread and leaves and stuff and all together just did it. Sitting down by the lake with our cabin.

Tina: And then . . .

- Jackie: We would go with someone, a partner, and walk to the end of the dock and light a candle let our boats go into the water.
- Tina: How did you feel when you did this?
- Jackie: I felt really good doing it. There were a lot of feelings came up for me. Just kind of relief and stuff.
- Tina: So you are the director of the camp, the one in charge . . .
- Jackie: Also, all the different activities and interacting with other age groups.
- Tina: Tell me about that.
- Jackie: Sometimes if I went down to the lodge when we had free time or something I would draw or play games or eating lunch.
- Tina: It is important to have that time to be together. So to do the memory boats, free time, when you got grouped together for meals. What else would you do if you were in charge?
- Jackie: Just have all those different activities like spa and I remember making tie dye shirts, and all of that is a lot of fun.
- Tina: So having a lot of different fun activities.
- Jackie: Yeah. And then a quiet time or something in. I think just thinking what you have done over the time you've been there.
- Tina: Having time just to reflect.
- Jackie: Yeah.
- Tina: Jackie, I'm wondering as camp goes on and campers have a chance to come back to camp older, in different age groups, has your own grief, do you feel as though your own process has changed?

Jackie: It is not as hard on me anymore. Then I didn't think anyone would really ever really understand. But then after camp it really hit me that others do.

Tina: How could camp continue to shift to meet the needs of people whose grief is really recent and those?

Jackie: Maybe, I don't know, I think it is good to have people who have been there awhile interact with people who are just starting. Because you were there too, so can help them kind of.

Tina: So you can be a support for one another. Would you propose more of a buddy system with new campers and returning campers?

Jackie: Yeah. So you can talk or just hang out a lot and do stuff together.

Tina: How would you figure who would go with who?

Jackie: Just a new camper and one who has been there before.

Tina: And girls or boys together or does it matter?

Jackie: It doesn't matter.

Tina: Just an old camper and a new camper. It also sounds like it would . . .

Jackie: [undecipherable]

Tina: [undecipherable]

Jackie: It might be. If you think about it.

Tina: Was there flexibility when camp [undecipherable]

Jackie: You had so many choices you didn't have to do this or if you didn't really want to do this you could do something else.

- Tina: So there were some different options. Did you ever feel that there just wasn't an option at all?
- Jackie: No.
- Tina: Anything else you can think of, think about how camp can maybe help a child who has had someone they are close to die?
- Jackie: Not really, the buddy thing.
- Tina: I wonder if the buddy system would be different or separate than the secret pals. Would there be certain times of day you would be with the buddy or with certain activities. What types of things would you do together?
- Jackie: Maybe do activities or sit and talk, drawing or something.
- Tina: So some particular buddy time as well as someone you get to know. Any other ideas?
- Jackie: Keep the swimming and quiet time.
- Tina: Many people talk about the importance of swimming. What is it about swimming that makes it such an important part of camp?
- Jackie: It is just so fun like after a hot day when you are tired it is nice to get in the cold water and hang out.
- Tina: It is refreshing and fun. It is important to have a chance to hang out.
- Jackie: Yeah.

The following are transcriptions of interviews in 2000 with campers first interviewed in 1998.

JEANETTE: CAMPER INTERVIEW 2000

Tina: When we met a couple of years ago we had a chance to go through an overview of your thoughts and reactions of being part of Camp O ' Ki' Suya. So much has changed since then, you've been back a couple of years and we have changed names, and we moved sites so I thought it would be helpful to get together again and hear your ideas and thoughts on how we can structure our camp. So if we can re-go-over some things. I can't remember how you found out about camp.

Jeanette: Through seasons.

Tina: Do you remember what you thought it was going to be like at camp?

Jeanette: A little scary because it was the first time I was going to be away from my mom for four days. And I was scared before [undecipherable]. Because I had someone there with me.

Tina: A close friend. When you thought of going to Bereavement Camp what did you think it was going to be like?

Jeanette: It would be scary but I have never been up in the woods and by water for four days. I have gone camping overnight but not for that long.

Tina: So you thought, I am going to a place that will be by water, it will be in the woods, and it is a Bereavement Camp. What would a Bereavement Camp be, if you hadn't been to a Bereavement Camp what would it be like?

Jeanette: I thought it would be a fun camp to go to for your summer. It is just like a regular camp but a little more fun.

Tina: A little more fun? How so?

Jeanette: Because some camps have to get up early and jog for a half hour, and they go eat and do more exercise and then you get to do the fun stuff. But it turned out to be a lot of fun.

Tina: How did it fit with what you thought it would be like?

Jeanette: It didn't really match at all, it was a lot more fun. And a lot more active than I thought it would be. It was a lot of fun.

Tina: When you say active, there are a lot of different activities at camp and you have done a lot of different things through the years. What comes to mind of some of the activities that you do at camp?

Jeanette: We went swimming and when you took your bed buddy outside and sat him down and whoever liked ice-cream had to switch places with you. It was a circle game, and I liked it when the lamas came and we made those necklaces.

Tina: You mentioned the bed buddies, how would you describe them?

Jeanette: I would say that they are stuffed animals that you get to sleep with and take home after camp.

Tina: What was that like for you?

Jeanette: That was pretty cool because I liked the lamb I got the first year and the next year I got a bear which is sitting up there. And I got a lot of different stuff.

Tina: So you did swimming, and you liked the bed buddy game. What are your favorite things to do at camp?

Jeanette: The crafts, making different things like puppets and pet rocks and the wood stuff. Just all the different crafts that they have.

Tina: Do you usually crafts by yourself?

Jeanette: With a group of people and I usually did crafts with Amanda because we would sit down and compare ideas. She would do something and I would copy her and I would do something and then she would copy me.

Tina: How is it decided when you do what at camp?

Jeanette: There is the schedule and you get to pick what you want to do. I liked that this year that you got to pick.

Tina: You liked having a bunch of choices?

Jeanette: I liked that. You had a certain time when you needed to be places like you cabin or the dining hall. And having the counselors there to make sure you got to where you needed to be.

Tina: What are your thoughts about the counselors at camp?

Jeanette: The counselors are really nice. They are there for you when you need them. Sometimes they could be a little mean but then again that was because we got in trouble for being too loud one night.

Tina: So tell me about being in trouble. What does it mean to be in trouble?

Jeanette: Being in trouble is not obeying the counselors or fighting with someone.

Tina: What happened when you got in trouble?

Jeanette: Well we didn't want to go to sleep so we were loud. Only Ruth was with us and we got in trouble because we were being too loud and we wouldn't go to sleep. But it started when Jodi said that there was a rat under her bed and she scared half to death. So then she scared herself. Then when Holly came back we had to go to sleep.

Tina: So when you say the counselors can be kind of mean sometimes, can you tell me about that?

Jeanette: Well, I remember one year when we got in trouble for being too loud and Tom sent us to the tent and forgot about us then we were stuck in there. We were going to take the rowboat and row it across and call our parents.

Tina: Oh no. So Tom told you to go out there and you just stayed there.

Jeanette: Yeah, we thought he was kind of mean after that but he is actually nice and funny.

Tina: So when you say they are mean, are they hurtful?

Jeanette: No, just in charge, so you had to do what they said. Stuff like that. Not really mean. But mean by telling you what to do.

Tina: How would you prefer the counselors at camp?

Jeanette: Well I think they are fine the way they are it is just that sometimes we do something that we think is right but it is actually wrong and they get mad at us.

Tina: You have been to camp four times.

Jeanette: Yeah eight, nine, ten, and eleven.

Tina: How was camp for you at different ages?

Jeanette: It was different between ten and eleven because we switched camps so we had to get used to the new camp. And when I was nine it was only me and Amanda, then when I was ten Melissa came so we hung out with her.

Tina: How do you think camp can be helpful for young people who had someone in their family die, like seven, eight and nine year olds? How is that the same or different and how it can be helpful?

Jeanette: Well, it might be helpful for little kids because they know they are not alone and they know that they are not the only ones who have lost someone. And they have someone to run around with and play and talk with. It is different than the older

kids because they already know there is someone else just like them. But, they also want someone their age to talk with.

Tina: So for the younger kids it is really important to have that to make them aware that there are other kids that have gone through the same things. And for the older kids it is important to have a place to get together and talk. I love hearing you stories, do you have a story about camp?

Jeanette: Then night we got in trouble, afterwards, everyone had to go to the bathroom before we went to bed. We were teasing the boys before and Brandon had to be carried into his cabin so he wouldn't fight with us. So they took flashlight out with them because it was dark and they didn't want the boys to scare them and they were screaming all the way down to the bathroom and then when we got to the bathroom I heard a door slam and they came running back up and Mandy tripped in a hole and they all came in and they were all tired. It was funny listening to them.

Tina: So it was fun for you just hearing the story even though you weren't out there.

Jeanette: Yeah.

Tina: I have heard that story, it sounds like a fun night for you all. I think camp was very meaningful for different people in different ways. Can you share something about what makes camp meaningful for you?

Jeanette: I like camp because I can go there and know that the people around me have lost someone too and I really liked it this year because I got closer to Mandy. She really missed her dad this year. And I just liked being someone that you can lean on.

Tina: So you were a support person for your friends? How was that for you?

Jeanette: It was fun and I felt like I was really helpful and important. It was nice.

Tina: Sounds like a real special thing for all of you that other kids were really missing people and you could be a shoulder to lean on. So what do you think is most helpful for young people have had someone close to them die?

Jeanette: Just being around people their own age that has gone through the same thing and talking about it. Sometimes when they talk about it more it doesn't seem as bad because some people have different opinions about what happened and whether it was good or bad.

Tina: Some people in the person's life or at camp?

Jeanette: Both, because if it was a good thing how they went then they could be there watching over you. Like one of my friends I know that has lost a little sister at birth and her grandma, so her grandma is watching over her little sister. That is how she feels.

Tina: Yeah, her understanding. You talked a lot about how it is important to have a place where you can come together with other young people who understand or have had a similar experience. And the importance of arts and crafts, swimming and running but also the opportunities to talk. How can camp be set up to make it safe for people to talk or help support young people to play and do arts and crafts and talk?

Jeanette: It is helpful that we have counselors that will do the stuff with you and they will talk with you. And then you have other people your age that you can talk to. Just to have a lot of people to talk to and do arts and crafts with and when you go swimming and stuff.

Tina: When you go swimming.

Jeanette: Yeah, it is fun when the counselors go swimming. People get thrown off the dock and then they come back and pull the counselors off the dock. And everyone gets wet.

- Tina: It is important to you to have counselors that are in there doing talking and swimming.
- Jeanette: Yeah, just being there and doing what you are doing and being fun and happy all at the same time.
- Tina: What parts of Bereavement Camp would you describe as the most helpful?
- Jeanette: When you sit for small groups and talk about whom you lost and whom other people lost. So you aren't feeling sorry for yourself because other people have lost too.
- Tina: So small groups come to mind as something that is helpful. Anything else?
- Jeanette: Cabins, because you get to know the people in your cabin and you talk with them. Because they won't tell anyone stuff you don't want told.
- Tina: So cabin time was helpful to. And the confidentiality that you can talk to someone and what you talk about stays with you. What could have been more helpful or what else would have been helpful?
- Jeanette: Having more time with your cabin so you can talk because the only real time you are in there is when you are sleeping or during quiet time. I think you should have more time with the people you are with for four days.
- Tina: More time to be close to this group of people. If you were in charge of the camp what would it be like?
- Jeanette: It would have a lot of activities to keep you busy. Nothing that you would have sit around and be bored. Something that everyone likes. The boys could play sports, while the girls did crafts or can go boating or swimming or for walks. Having stuff that everyone likes to do. Make stuff with beads and weaving bracelets and stuff.
- Tina: The opportunities to be creative sound really

important.

Jeanette: Yeah, and sharing more. Because some people would take more fabric and more scissors, because at quilt square time we had to pass them between two tables.

Tina: So having plenty of supplies for everyone to have.

Jeanette: Yeah, and asking before you take something off the table, There were a couple of older groups that took stuff from the younger groups.

Tina: Just to make sure that each of the groups have what they need. In the groups it sounds like the supplies were important. You talk in those groups but you need supplies. Do you want to talk about what quilt squares are all about?

Jeanette: The quilt squares are in memory of the person you lost, sometimes people like to make one like, John was here 99'. Then other times it really means something to someone. Like mine this year. This is also a time to share stuff, to get to know someone one or what he or she likes to do or how he or she puts things on pages.

Tina: Oh, you learn about each other without talking? I really appreciate your input; you have a lot of great ideas. Does anything else come to mind that you want me to consider about your experience at camp?

Jeanette: One thing that would be a lot better would be if you had some of the older counselors come back. If you could split the counselors half-and-half like Tom and Paul.

Tina: You thought that worked well, to have them split time. Tell me more about what you are thinking about splitting the time. Just to allow more people to come back.

Jeanette: Yeah, for more counselors to come back. I think it really helped with the pen pals because some

only make one thing but if they have two people then they have to put more effort into it.

Tina: Okay. So one thing that you want me to think about is the importance of having the consistency of staff. The new staff are fine but it is nice to have the old staff come back. Other things that come to mind?

Jeanette: Maybe having more time doing things like crafts or swimming or going for walks or recreation time.

Tina: Having longer blocks of time. Do you think that is different for younger kids?

Jeanette: Yeah, some older kids might want to do something else besides what they are doing. Like they would be doing crafts but they really want to go swimming. So they might want shorter time. For younger kids they want it longer. Like swimming.

Tina: Sounds like the options were good but longer blocks of time. Do you want to say anything about the kids coming back? What reasons do you think bring you back to camp year after year?

Jeanette: Because it is really fun and time away from everything else to do things you want to do and not have to run around to appointments or just stay at home and be bored. It gives you time to be yourself. And it is really fun and your friends go. Like Mandy, who I don't get to see during the year, only at camp.

Tina: Thank you. I like getting your feedback. You have great insights. How has it been helpful for you?

Jeanette: Because I can express my feelings about what happened and why it happened. It wasn't because of me it was just because. It's helped me to realize that I am not alone. And that I need to not worry so much about if it will happen again and to be okay with it.

Tina: So letting go of the responsibility so you don't feel like it is your fault.

Jeanette: Yeah.

PIPPEN: CAMPER INTERVIEW 2000

NOTE: Tape with 10 yr. old male camper (the recorder was not properly set during interview, following is a post-interview, interview which this camper agreed to in an effort to capture some of his points on tape):

Tina: I am really glad you told me that when you did the memory boats it felt really sad to you and you weren't sure if it was what you wanted to do. I wondered if you felt that you had the option to opt out of doing it if you didn't want to do it. Did you feel like you had that option?

Pippen: Yeah, I did. I just didn't want to because it took me a long time to make mine and I didn't want to waste it.

Tina: How was the process of making the boat for you.

Pippen: Fun.

Tina: What was the process of making the boats?

Pippen: First you had to go out and collect a piece of wood and you got glue and me and Ryder make a huge one that we called Titanic Sole Survivor. It was huge.

Tina: So you made this huge boat with a piece of wood and glue?

Pippen: Yeah and we glued sticks on and everything and then a wave runner made it almost crash and then it did crash.

Tina: We talked before and the tape didn't pick up our conversation so we agreed to chat for a little longer. You had talked about a few things that you did at camp that you enjoyed the most. What would you say your favorite things at camps are?

Pippen: The eating and sleeping and swimming.

Tina: Food is important at this camp. You had talked about that the food and eating things are

important to give you the energy so you could swim. What do you remember liking about swimming?

Pippen: Because we swam across the river and our bellies touched the river-weed and it just felt good.

Tina: Quite a challenge to swim across that. You talked about having fun. Say again what you enjoyed the least about camp.

Pippen: The memory boats and when Brandon and Corey got in a fight.

Tina: What was it about the memory boats?

Pippen: Because everyone cried and it just made me sad.

Tina: Can you think of another way...you said earlier that you knew you could opt out but you really liked making the memory boats and you put all this work into this huge Titanic that you made. Can you think of a way that that it could be made more comfortable or could be done differently that would be better for you?

Pippen: No.

Tina: Would you recommend that it be skipped.

Pippen: No

Tina: It is your least favorite part of camp but you wouldn't recommend that it be skipped?

Pippen: Yeah.

Tina: Tell me about that.

Pippen: I don't know. I like making it and setting it off and lighting the candles. And watching them get sunk by the wave runners.

Tina: Tell me about something meaningful that happened for you at camp.

Pippen: When me and Ryder and Stetson were gopher hunting there is this shocker inside a camera where you

have to charge it up. And it was all charged up and I was holding it by where it was safe and I saw a gopher and I told Ryder to hit it because he didn't have a shocker and he grabbed it out of my hand and it shocked him and he threw it at me and I caught it. It shocked me and then I threw it at the gopher and it shocked the gopher. Then it ran away and we got the shocker back.

Tina: And that was meaningful for you . . .

Pippen: Because it was fun.

Tina: It was a fun time at camp. Ok, lets say someone came up to you at school and said you know I was thinking about going to Bereavement Camp but I don't really know what it is like. What is it like? Where do you go? What do you do? Where do you stay at camp? How would you describe camp?

Pippen: Fun and sometimes it is sad but not always. You get to have a lot of fun.

Tina: What if I said, well I think I could just stay here and have fun playing with toys.

Pippen: Then I would say, well you could go gopher hunting there and you can go swimming at camp. It is just really fun.

Tina: You came up with a couple different ways that a camp is important or can be helpful for kids who have had someone in their family die. How would you say . . .

Pippen: It is fun and you can make friends.

Tina: How would that be different than if I went to a different camp that wasn't a Bereavement Camp?

Pippen: You have the same thing in common, someone in your family died so you can make friends easier.

Tina: When I write this paper, if I talk to other people who are interested in setting up a Bereavement Camp, what would you say are the most

important parts of a camp to make sure they have at their place?

Pippen: A lake and a bunch of gophers.

Tina: Anything about where you stay or who works there or who doesn't work there or the kids that go there?

Pippen: No.

Tina: The lake is important?

Pippen: Yes because you can go swimming and fishing.

Tina: The gophers are important. Is it important to be outdoors, could you do it in the city?

Pippen: No, I don't think there are very many lakes in the middle of the city.

Tina: So not just swimming in a swimming pool. It is important to be out?

Pippen: Yeah, out in a lake. Where there are only a couple kids instead of a bunch of kids.

Tina: So if they set it up somewhere where there is a lake and gophers and food, how long of a program do you think?

Pippen: A week.

Tina: How about just overnight do you think that would do it?

Pippen: No.

Tina: How come?

Pippen: Because it is more fun when you have a long time and you get a bunch of bug bites and you get to do a bunch of stuff instead of the same old stuff.

Tina: Thank you, it is very helpful for me. Are there other things you want me to consider?

Pippen: No.

ROSE: PARENT INTERVIEW 1998

Tina: I want to start by asking how did you hear about camp?

Rose: I heard about camp last year from Paul [counselor's name], he called and said they were planning it and that Pippen was young because it was 8-12, but that he had known Pippen and Pippen also knew Bertha [another counselor] and he asked if Pippen could go because he was sure that Pippen would be O.K. there and actually promised to take responsibility for him. So since I knew two of the counselors um and I thought Pippen would do O.K. on an overnight even though he had never done one before I thought if he knew people he would be comfortable even at 7 ½. So that's how I got started with it and he had such a good year last year he immediately wanted to know, "Can I go back next year?" so that's why we did it again this year.

Tina: So Paul actually called you to let you know about it.

Rose: Um hmmm. Pippen had worked with Paul when he worked at the Y. and then Pippen went to the Camp Fire program at Lewis and Clark so we kept in touch with Paul because all of his jobs involve us (laughter) so he called last year when we were always talking back and forth through Camp Fire. And yeah, so that's how it kind of came up. Then I gave him a couple other names of people I knew and for one reason or another either couldn't get a hold of or weren't interested but they didn't end up going so Pippen didn't know any of the other kids there last year.

Tina: When you heard about the program, what were your hopes or expectations?

Rose: Well, um, my hope was it would, my emphasis was and I talked about this with Paul, was more than a fear than a hope, that the emphasis be placed on we are all alike, we've all shared this certain kind of thing and you can say whatever

you want to say, but that the emphasis be sort of how to have fun. All of these kids there know how to mourn. They do it day in and day out. They've lived with it sometimes for years and the important thing is that they again learn that that doesn't stop you from having a life and enjoying things and that the person you lost would not want you to not have a wonderful camp experience. But I've also watched Pippen be shushed by parents who said, "He didn't really lose his dad did he?", and watched other kids back off when they hear that his dad is dead. It sets you apart and especially at that age, 7 to 12 you so much don't want to be set apart that I thought it would be a great experience if they could pull it off that it wasn't an overwhelming emotional sense. You know, I just don't think, kids at that age I think, what I've noticed with grieving, Pippen was 4 ½ when his dad died, is that they come and go in it. They touch it and move away, uh, it is a constant interaction with the grief and every year they experience it again on a different level so it is a constant sense of grieving through different states of awareness. And every year we go through another intense period usually somewhere around the anniversary of his death. And Pippen reaches a different kind of understanding of it. So that's where I see the camp as being with him at each age, a different awareness. Now he's just looking for fun and play and shaving cream fights, but this year he did the memory boats where last year it was like yeah, I did a memory boat but the only, it was cool to watch it float, but there was nothing else. This year it was a real more awareness of what that was about and next year will be even more so. So I think having the different ages together is a great thing. I think as they get to see kids a little farther down the road they get to see kids who grieved longer, it is such a stage thing.

Tina: [Undecipherable]

Rose: Exactly, Exactly. Like I found it interesting that he and Annie are such good friends, not that that surprised me, but that watching Annie and

remembering how much Pippen was like that before in that early stage of the grief and how obsessed you are with every thing that happens through the day is about that, and now looking at Pippen and wow he really has come a long ways where, not that we don't discuss it, it is still a big part of our lives, but we have a whole life aside from grief and you know that has taken four years to get to that point and it was really interesting to see him juxtaposed to that and for me to see that we really have made progress, you know, sometimes you think we're just spinning our wheels but we really have gotten a little more healthy and a little more sane.

Tina: The grief is playing a different role . . .

Rose: Exactly, oh yeah, it is not the flu you don't get over it, he can see that and I think it important too.

Tina: So your hopes were that Pippen would have a chance to be with others with similar experiences in a situation where the focus was on fun and honoring being at different places.

Rose: Exactly.

Tina: So how did the camp experience fit with your expectations.

Rose: Oh it was perfect. It was just perfect and the fact that Paul was there, because he was so young I think 8 is really a good age because I think Pippen was a little too young and I think he could have been disruptive if Pippen weren't there saying "no, no, lets let these kids do their thing, too" and I think sort of kept him in line with what was happening although, willing to take the little kids for a walk, their attention span is so different. But I think it worked very well and he just, you know, he is sort of the camp mascot, he was, the kids just loved him and he like them and he didn't get homesick at all which kind of irritated me (laughter), but I missed him terribly. But yeah, it was just such a positive experience for both of us. You know,

when I got there you could tell it was just this big smile and "Mom, can I come next year" so you know it was just no reservations about doing it again at all it was a wonderful first experience.

Tina: It is interesting to hear you describe that. It could be a wonderful experience but in different ways than you'd hoped that it would but it sounds like in this case it met what your hopes and expectations were going in.

Rose: It did, I can't say there were too many surprises. I knew he was a little young and so I was prepared, I knew there were a few problems with the Game Boy thing and I was aware of that. But how much he enjoyed it really surprised me and even the things I thought might have been a little too intense for him he just kind of ignored, and it just kind of went over his head at that point and then this year it was a little bit deeper he understood more so I think that is just normal.

Tina: How did Pippen, if you can at all separate the camp from other experiences, how did he respond to the camp experience?

Rose: I think just overwhelmingly positive. He bonded really positively with the kids I think because they had something in common even though they were completely different kids, if he would have met them at school there would have been no connection, but they had that at camp, we are all here, we're doing the same work kind of focus and I think it was a really good experience. And also one that he got to bond with kids who did have that difference. We just don't know a lot of young kids, who, it's fairly unusual, you know a lot of divorced single mothers but you don't know a lot of widowed single mothers, I don't anyway and for Pippen it made him feel not so different but special and it is a subtle distinction but a really important one.

Tina: Did you notice anything behavioral or emotional?

Rose: He was more willing to talk about his dad. He's always been willing to talk about it to me, but he was more open with other people after he came back, where I think that um that awareness that you could just go ahead and say it. I've always encouraged the kids to go ahead and say it and if it makes someone uncomfortable that's really their problem, you don't have to censor what you are thinking of saying just because some people hit the door running, and more people than not hit the door running and my feeling on that was always that you are better off knowing that right up front, and Bertha's husband Phil calls it, oh shoot, you'll have to ask her. Anyway the factor of knowing whether you can count on someone right up front, you give it to them and if they go, well than good riddance. But I think he was a little more willing to take that chance because there'd been so many people who had, through the camp, there's a whole group of people out there who aren't going to be uncomfortable by me mentioning that I have a Dad, you know I think it was a little more security.

Tina: As a parent, what do you perceive as the most important components or parts of a bereavement camp?

Rose: I think opportunities without pressure. A variety of age appropriate activities, even though they are all at camp together, I think one, maybe I think Annie gets into arts and craft projects a little more than Pippen when we talked and allowing them those choices and how they express it. I just really developed a great respect for how children choose to respect, or voice their concerns and it's been difficult for me to be open to all the variables. They go about it their own way and you may set aside this time and prepare this wonderful activity and they are completely not into it they would just as soon drill little balls of putty at each other and you know, and then a few hours later when you are supposed to be doing clean up and dinner all of the sudden you find yourself having this conversation that is much more than anything you dreamed possible as far as them expressing what

they thought and how. I've constantly had to assess my own desire for how I want things expressed and not made them follow my expectations and that's been a really challenging thing. I think adults kind of get locked into certain things and kids are much more free form in their in their expression, so I think providing a wide range of activities and then allowing choices for those things and allowing them to have some down time because it can be so intense they feel uncomfortable and I think if they feel uncomfortable they are less likely to try it again next time there is an activity. With camp, I think the walk is a good one and the memory boats are great because it is kind of a non-threatening thing, you know, it is not like let's sit and have an intense chat. I think especially with kids that young they don't know what to say, even I miss my dad or whoever, I mean they can't really say. Even at my age I can't always say why I'm in awe about something. And if they learn to trust their own instincts and judgment that is just a huge blessing learned and prepares them for when they are an adult and it . . . they just learned it earlier.

Tina: What are your thoughts about how parents are involved?

Rose: I thought the first year was not very good as far as that went because I didn't really feel like I knew what was going to be happening and it is terrifying as a parent to send your child off and I wouldn't have let him go if it hadn't been for Paul and Bertha, it is just terrifying to think I don't know any of these people and they are dealing with something so precious that it is a little scary so I think the Open House this year was a good start but I would like to see, and I know you didn't have a great turn out at that but I think if parents could kind of have a preliminary, kind of a casual period to see other kids to see them working with other children, you know what I mean? Sort of expand on the Open House idea a little bit.

Tina: To make an open house opportunity with perhaps more structure and interaction,

Rose: A get acquainted kind of thing, because I think that just calms parents quite a bit. And then I loved at the end that we were invited and got to be there for the lunch. I thought that was a great addition, I strongly encourage that because it let me talk to different people, I talked to Pele (counselor), I talked to Bertha so I kind of knew not what Pippen was going to say at all, but I kind of knew what the week had gone like, where he'd had [undecipherable]. I felt just a little more prepared, I thought that was a good thing doing the exit interviews. And the only thing I didn't like about it was when we got there they were having the goodbye meeting and it was really hard on the parents, everybody sitting there was saying "do they know how much we missed them?", you know it was kind of like if that could be moved earlier, so when the parents get there, because you're just ready to be with your kid. And that was kind of hard. I remember Carli, Annie's mom saying, "I'm going to go over and get her."

Tina: That's my daughter over there!

Rose: Yeah, and feeling sort of put back, but then when everyone came up it was great to give the kids a big hug and get to talk, so if that could be moved up a bit to have the parents when they come in to feel a little more welcome.

Tina: That sounds real important.

Rose: Yeah that was a little bit. I thought the whole lunch thing, It just made me feel real good about it. Any of the counselors who could stick around, most of them did but some of them had to leave and there were some who I didn't get to talk to, so have a set time or something. And also I don't know, one of the things I've always thought was that there could be more information sent out earlier on. I remember getting letters that were not before that were like oh, gosh, I need to take care of that. Even though I got the early

health forms and took care of all of that it was still kind of a rush to pull things together.

Tina: So that all the pieces are in place.

Rose: Exactly and that I had covered all the bases and sent everything. I mean it is just kind of hard especially with single parents who like those advance notice things to just have a little time and information about what is going on. This year was much better and I think that is just kind of an organizational thing. I'm sort of mentioning that as a minor point.

Tina: But the more information.

Rose: The more information the better. It just makes you feel a little better about packing your kid up.

Tina: I guess that is one of the things that I think about with the goal. How do we have something like a camp that is physically removed from the home, from the child's primary support system, you, who is not necessarily at camp, how do we help that information generalize back and forth? Some of that is going to be through tighter communication with you and through you coming up at the end,

Rose: At the end, because I think it is a huge advantage that they learn to grieve on their own - that they be allowed that, that they not be influenced by my moods or my um, I just think that is one of the strongest points is that it is separate from the home and that they learn that they are going to have to learn to carry this weight on their own and learn how to do this. I mean we help them as much as we can but mentally Pippen will spend the rest of his life without a father and he's got to learn how to do that at all different ages. I'm not always going to be there when he hits a rough time. But the communication with the parents is good because it sort of sets us up with what we've got coming now. It is just a hard go to be hit by something sort of blind-sided. Even, you know, I really,

the exit interview with specific things that can be done with the counselor at the end, possibly specifics about how the child did, not, I mean I've always felt that that was Pippen's free space. Any time he has talked with a counselor I have never asked questions. But sort of saying he had a rough time with this or he was really into this activity you may want to look at. Nothing kind of confidential between the child and the adults there gets passed because I like to see them have their space. But sort of saying you may want to explore this avenue, they really latched onto this. So it is something a little more, I mean when Pele and I talked at the exit interview it was really what can we do different at camp, but I think there is room for that as a parent as well, not a judgement kind of thing, but how could we, what could I do a little bit differently. I am always looking for that with people, I'm always talking to teachers, how's he doing socially, do you notice anything.

Tina: [undecipherable]

Rose: Exactly, exactly. I think that would be a good thing to incorporate into the exit interview.

Tina: That is really helpful [undecipherable] even to do a potential exit interview with questions that parents could choose what they want to address.

Rose: That would be a great idea because it would completely move it out of the realm of anything judgmental. If you had a set form that said strengths, weaknesses, likes, dislikes, it is just so easy to be defensive like, what do you mean he whined? [laughter] Even though I know he whines, I don't want to hear somebody else say it, so that might be a good thing that happens before, sort of allowing the parents to say, let me know how he did in what areas. Did he do okay socially? Was he inappropriate with language? Were there different things. You know it is funny because being a single parent is the most awful thing in the world because you have no one to bounce things off. It is constantly working without a net. I'm always saying don't leave me

hanging out here, if you have information I should know here, let me know it. But you always trying to guess whether you are doing the right thing. You don't have that person behind you saying, "of course we are doing the right thing." You are working without a net at all times and so I think the more information you have the better odds you have of surviving it.

Tina: Okay. Good. Other ideas that come up for you?

Rose: Let's see. [pause]

Tina: It is helpful to hear your ideas. If you were in charge of the camp what would you do differently or what would you do the same? [Undecipherable]

Rose: Yeah. One of the things I talked about with Pele was that he didn't know if you were going to do two sessions next year because of it growing and he mentioned that and asked what I thought about breaking them up into age groups. I said I thought that was a bad idea. Having them together is such a great thing because you get to spend, such a range of capabilities in dealing with grief. And also not having kids are all in their first year of grief because then you get to see kids like Pippen who pretty much have it down pat and see this little kid going, "yeah, I remember doing that when my dad died, don't worry it will pass." Maybe telling a 10 or 12 year old that and them going, "wow, this kid is doing it." So I think those variations are a great part of the camp so I would not mess with that aspect of it. And as far as the activities go, he liked so many of them, I'm sure when he talks to you he'll say, "I don't know, nothing" but they come up all the time in conversation, some thing he did at camp. The tippy canoe, constantly, we were in the middle of Holland Lake last week and me with two kids in the canoe and he wanted to do tippy canoe, and I said, "no, I don't think so, I can't get to both of you in time, even with life jackets."

Tina: Right.

Rose: Even with life jackets we are not doing it. So you know those kind of things come up. But all of the activities he seemed to really enjoy.

Tina: [undecipherable] Some kids did tippy canoe all afternoon. Let's look at the analogy here, being in a boat, having the boat flip, flipping it back over and trying to get in and figuring out how you are going to balance that and it is full of water now, the kids [undecipherable] it really hit a lot of kids. They didn't have to talk about it.

Rose: Oh and I think that kind of thing is so impacts on kids. "I did that hard thing" and I don't think there are degrees of pain, you are either in it or you are not, and to get to do something like that where it is, "ok this is wet and cold" and it is fun, too. Yeah, know I think that was a great one that whole outdoor stuff, even the camp fire, he loved the campfires at night.

Tina: [undecipherable]

Rose: Well and I think that those are the times that some will be sad and a dialog gets opened and those unstructured things that's what I've learned in our day to day lives is it is when we are driving in the car to something that is clear across town when Pippen will say, "mom, remember when Daddy died?" That seems to be those times when you are sort of forced into togetherness but there is really nothing happening. For us it tends to be in the car, or waiting places.

Tina: [undecipherable]

Rose: Exactly, where you are all together there and you can't really move away from it other than to go to bed but it is nonthreatening, it is not structured, and it allows for those free times for things to be said that otherwise life is too busy to say. We just don't have time. So I think they all have way too much structure in their lives, the less structure the better.

Tina: Well, thank you.

Rose: You are welcome, if you come up with any other questions you can always give me a call.

Tina: [undecipherable]

Rose: No, I don't think so, I think that would be good. I guess when I said don't split the ages, I mean there comes a point when 15 year old,

Tina: Don't split the 8-12 year olds?

Rose: Yeah, a 15 and 7 year old is a little too wide. It is just too much. Their age-appropriate things are so different. But that is what I meant, it is not that maybe a 12-15 and then parents can decide 8-12, maybe their kids would enjoy being with the littler kids, it is less threatening or whatever, or maybe they are ready to bump up.

DORI: PARENT INTERVIEW 1998

Tina: I am going to have some questions that are kind of standard that I am asking everybody but feel free as ideas come up or thoughts or feelings or things you feel are important, we can take it wherever.

Dori: Okay.

Tina: You are going to have a unique perspective in that you participated in camp a couple of different years and so in some ways these questions are going to go way back, I just wanted to start out hearing how did you hear about Camp O'Ki'Suya?

Dori: I have to think way back. [pause] I think you told me, because we were in Seasons and somebody from Seasons sent me something so it might have been you it might have been one of the others. I think it has been three years because we went in the summer to Seasons, and I think it got done like in May or June and then the next year we went to camp and we went to camp this year and so it came in the mail or somebody called me and I'm sure it was through Seasons.

Tina: I think about that question a lot because I realize what a lot of trust and faith parents put in camp, allowing their child who is bereaved come to camp, and I just wonder how people hear about it and make that choice.

Dori: I think it was based mostly on when Jeannette heard that you were going to do it because she really liked you.

Tina: So having a familiar person go.

Dori: Yeah. Having someone that she knew helped a lot and having Analea [peer camper] go was just perfect.

Tina: Added bonus.

Dori: Yeah. It was, it was an added bonus.

- Tina: What hopes or expectations did you have?
- Dori: Just the hope that she would understand that she is not the only one in that situation, that there are other kids out there who have the same feelings and the same problems and get upset like she does and that she is not the only one, so there are some other people out there. Because I know I think she felt that way sometimes. Right after, she was only four, so, but still going to school and saying things like my brother died and people would say, "oh yeah, sure" you know, give her a hard time I think and that upset her and then she felt like you know she was maybe the only one and now she knows she is not. Other kids feel the same way she does and that makes her feel a little better.
- Tina: Something that people go through, experiencing a major loss but not usually at age four, usually much much later.
- Dori: No, no that's true.
- Tina: So as she has gone to camp and shared her stories, how has the program met your expectations, or your hopes and expectations going in?
- Dori: I think it has done, it has helped her to understand a lot of things. I think it has met my expectations fantastically, she enjoys it. I was really surprised the first year she never called me so, cuz that is a long way from home and being away is, that was hard for her at first, being away from me for, even to sleep over night. I mean she used to sleep over night and then all of the sudden she didn't want to do it anymore and when I left her there I thought, I didn't know if she was going to call right away, but I never heard a word from her. It worked real well this year she just said, "good-bye, see you later", and so I left. [laughter]
- Tina: Now it is routine.

- Dori: Yeah, now it is routine, it is kind of strange. Yeah, but I think it has helped her grow a little bit and not be so sensitive to something that other people might say, people who don't know what is going on or say something they don't mean to say and that. She is real sensitive about a lot of stuff like that but she seems to be able to take it in stride now and just let it go and not get upset about it so I think that has helped a lot. It has helped her grow.
- Tina: Did you notice differences in different years as far as what your hopes and expectations were or how they were [undecipherable] last year or this year?
- Dori: You know she didn't really talk a lot about what she did so it was fine. So she never ever said that there was anything that she didn't like so I just assume that it went just fine [laughter]. It is hard to say sometimes with Jeannette, sometimes she talks about it and sometimes [undecipherable]. So you might get more out her than I can get out of her.
- Tina: Yeah. And that is another question I had, how did Jeannette respond to camp? Did you notice any behavioral or emotional changes?
- Dori: No I don't think so. Seems to be the same kid she was before so I guess that is really hard to tell. I think she maybe accepts things that her father does, before that used to upset her a lot, she seems to I think accept them more because that is part of a loss, too, is not being with her father when she wants to be. That is hard on her, but she doesn't seem to be getting so upset when he breaks his promises or when he doesn't come when he says he is going to come. So maybe the camp in that way has helped her to grow a little bit more emotionally, to be able to handle disappointments better than she used to.
- Tina: It is hard to know how much is developmental and how much is related to what you do or going to a camp or whatever.

Dori: Yeah, that's true, it is hard to tell, but I think she's doing well. She really enjoys going to camp and I think it does help her just to be around other kids, even kids she was with last year to be with them again makes her feel good. One little boy, she was amazed that he was at camp, he goes to school with her. He had lost his mother and she had thought, I guess his step-mother is at school all the time and she hadn't even realized that he had lost his mother. So I think it gave her a different perspective on him and I think maybe she is a little nicer to him than she was before.

Tina: A new understanding.

Dori: Yeah, I think so. Yeah, she seems to. She said, "I can't believe that he was there". And well these things happen to other people, too, not just you. So I think it has helped her grow emotionally in that respect, too. She is a little bit nicer to other kids, too. [undecipherable] not her little brother. That is one area we have to work on still.

Tina: It is tough.

Dori: Oh, yeah, oh yeah it is, especially with [brother's name] with the fact that he has the ADHD because I have to treat him different. It is hard for her to understand that, but I just can't deal with him the same way that I did with her. And that is one thing that is real hard for her to understand.

Tina: That she is treated differently.

Dori: That's right, that's right.

Tina: As a parent, what do you feel are the most important components, the most important parts of camp?

Dori: I think you might, you know, sometimes kids don't like to talk to their parents about things, about how they feel about what has happened to them and I think going to someone who you are spending

four days with, and you may be able to say things to them that you don't feel like you should say to your parents or that you don't feel that your parents would understand how you feel because you're a kid, you know, and they are adults. At camp I think the barrier is broken down a little bit and she is able to say things to you or to another camp counselor that she would never say to me. I think that helps in that respect. It lets her get some things off her chest that she is worried about or thinking about, because she is a little bit of a worrier.

Tina: So opportunities to connect with a support system outside of the family.

Dori: Yeah, and maybe even just to talk to the other kids, too, and say things she would never say to anyone else, so I think that helps, too.

Tina: If you were in charge of the camp, what would you make sure you did the same and what would you make sure to do differently?

Dori: Well I know they really enjoy those little animals that come on the bed every year.

Tina: The animals are keepers.

Dori: Yeah, and it is like you know, something special for them. The minute they get there they know there is something special there for them and they have to go hunt out the one they like the best and that's their bed. I know that was their big priority this year was to run to their cabin and see what was on their bed. I think the things that you all have done so far have worked real well. I think that trail that they had, they took me up the trail and showed me where they left thing along the trail this last year, and the pictures that they made and what they wrote, Annalea wrote to her mom and Jeannette wrote to her brother. I mean that is something that I think they need. It gets some of the stuff out that they save up through the years, they want to say something and they don't know how to say it. Drawing pictures and leaving them, or the boats

that they built and sent out into the water they really like those.

Tina: I am really glad we talked because what you are talking about is something that our traditional [undecipherable].

Dori: Just that I know they have fun when they are swimming and running around doing stuff with other kids. She didn't say much except that they had fun. I think maybe the secret pal thing was kind of cool, they liked that. It was something they could do for someone and it was a secret.

Tina: [undecipherable - something about communication with parents]

Dori: I think they did fine, it is kind of hard to get people together during the course of a year. I thought the little get together before camp was nice and you get to, sometimes you get to meet some of the other campers and talk to them. I know the one you did when we all together and did that thing last summer, out by Marshall, or out at that one lady's studio. I thought that was nice. That was a nice get together and you got to meet some of the parents that you didn't get to meet when you drop them off at camp because you don't stay that long and you get to see the kids with the parents and the parents get to kind of talk and communicate and that is a good idea, because you know parents of course need the same thing the kids need, you don't meet too many people who have had someone die in their family as a day to day thing. So you know, so you say something like that and people get real, they don't know what to say or they say, "I'm sorry" or they don't know, or they are embarrassed because they don't know whether you want to talk about it or not so to actually meet parents that actually know what you are going through is nice.

Tina: [undecipherable]

Dori: There might be if you wanted to have one of those get-togethers maybe twice in between camp or something, once in the winter time once in the

spring before they go back to camp, just a little get together, where everyone brings a little food and has a little picnic or something like that. And sitting around talking when you are eating is probably the best way to get information back and forth anyway.

Tina: Casual.

Dori: Yeah real casual, not anything real formal because a lot of people don't like formal, they just like to mix and wander around and you get to talk to, say what you want to say, and the kids seem to play pretty good by themselves anyway so, they know each other by then and I think it is a good way to bring new people in, too. It is not so scary as a big formal setting when you just do something casual.

Tina: Is there anything else as we talk that you want me to consider.

Dori: Not off the top of my head. I just like the way it is. I wouldn't change anything.

Tina: I just want to thank you so much for sharing your stories and ideas and [tape stopped]

GERALD: PARENT INTERVIEW 1998

Gerald: ..her situation, she was the only girl and she feels left out and shoulders more than a lot of young girls, so sometimes, at her age, 11 years old you can't go places yet, well he can do it why can't I? Well because you're younger and when you're older, a lot of it gets to I said no because I'm a dad.

Tina: Being aware that the expectations and privileges are different at different ages.

Gerald: Different ages, different personalities, how they are, so sometimes you just let them go and sometimes you try and explain it to them. It doesn't really sink in [undecipherable] "you're not the dad". When she comes back from camp she is a lot more settled, a lot more outgoing. I think she realizes [undecipherable]. She also has girls around her so she is not always, she is not fighting for her life all the time quote unquote, someone pays attention to her and that helps a lot. The thing that, her mother died when she was four so she doesn't recall her and Brett had been around for awhile so a lot of the pictures in the house were us and Brett, very few of her, because she had cancer and with emotional stresses other things, taking pictures is just not on the top of the list. The camera is put away and her mother was looking pretty badly, but still the bottom line is there's not many pictures of Gwen and her mom. Of course Brett being the brother uses that sometimes as a lever and it is hard to tell, I can not tell to this day normal brother sister, I've got something on you so I'm going to use it, really just being spiteful. I know mommy better than you did. To this day I can't hardly tell. Once in a great while I can see where it is coming from. It is really hard to tell if he's just using it because that is his sister and he's got something on her or if he is just really being spiteful.

Tina: Sure. [undecipherable]

Gerald: He's playing baseball. Every body else is out there trying to win and he's just out there having a good time, you know. So it is hard. A little competitive [undecipherable] I guess, but for some reason [undecipherable] which is an ongoing thing. Sometimes there's a situation and I'll say you just need to go on with life. Other times you sit down and talk to her, hold her, explain to her, [undecipherable] Brett seems to handle it a lot better, I have never heard him, I have yet to hear him say in the last two or three years, "I wish Mom were here". So I think he is moving on. He is a little older though, too, but I think he's finally got it resolved with himself. So I've got a little of this, put it with this, resolve it, put it in a box, whatever.

Tina: [undecipherable, something about so developmentally and about the experience]

Gerald: [undecipherable] He is pretty solid. So him going to camp, as for him being bereaved, there wouldn't be that much he needs, but him being there and seeing other kids it doesn't bother me anymore it is cool, it is alright, maybe it can in some respects help [undecipherable] be less judgmental. He'll go next year because he had a good time. [undecipherable].

Tina: Part of what you are referring to is kind of the importance of kids seeing other kids at different stages of their grief.

Gerald: Not just counselors or Mom and Dad saying, "This is what is happening, you are all right." They've all gone through all sorts of stuff and can see, "hey this kid made it" and at different times it is just different. Certain things that happen [undecipherable]time and order and it's up to the individual, but we've all got to cry it doesn't happen at a certain time. But Gwen, I'm a little bit worried about, a lot of her troubles stem from being the only girl.(pause)

Tina: [undecipherable]

Gerald: Oh a couple of years ago a school counselor said she was real quiet and withdrawn and the school counselor, I guess she was just real sad, so the counselor brought her and sent out letters and stuff. She went to Girl Scout camp which was very, a very too bad experience.

Tina: Was that before she went to bereavement camp?

Gerald: Yeah. She went to Girl Scout Camp and her aunt picked her and they stayed over night at Georgetown at the lodge then they brought her up there Sunday so she was gone from home all week. Girl Scout Camp was something to do - the counselors were so much less, I got the impression from hearing her talk that the counselors were at their own camp like you guys go play your games and be quiet and stay away and go have squirt gun fights and have a good time, and your camp was a world of difference.

Tina: [undecipherable]

Gerald: [undecipherable] the shaving cream fight, the girls raiding the boys cabins. The kid's horseplay is a very important part of the camp. Especially, [undecipherable] every kid is caught up and every counselor is and all this time is set aside and it is all structured. And there are no real time for horseplay.

Tina: So the spontaneity and the counselor's involvement is an important part of camp?

Gerald: Yeah, it is. And if you as a counselor don't take part in it and kind of well it is not suppose to happen but if well maybe I should go get a soda or go talk to the cook for awhile, you know, whatever, if you are a kid and you have enough trouble as it is bereavement or what ever else. First time, of course I was going through Viet Nam and stuff a lot of the old people are [undecipherable] and all we did was laugh. Laughed about having your hair done by a power company and living under a power line. Just

laugh. It was such, such a relief, such a relief, to have fun and laugh so hard. It is so important. It is the same for a kid and it is overlooked. Some of the people I talk to say they'll get over it and pass it on and don't get so wound up. But kids they know how to deal with it. But to be at camp, away from the usual household stresses of the memories and whatever just to be able to have fun [undecipherable] It was almost like she was on a break from emotions and I think that is an important part of the process. [undecipherable]

Tina: [undecipherable, something about others don't give kids permission to laugh]

Gerald: Yeah. Don't laugh. Yeah. I'm not saying go out and bust out any walls or something like that, but every one gets so wrapped up with that it is important to cry and the anger and this and that but they overlook the laughing. The fun. The sponteneity, going on the carousel. And it is like you said people will think like well you must be all better because you laughed, or are you crazy all this just happened and you are having a good time or something. But the important part is to have fun. Being with other kids in the same boat, that all have the same problems, can all laugh, it is going to be all right.

Tina: [undecipherable]

Gerald: That was something that just came up before it all came up. Gwen just wouldn't come out, she was always gone, so quiet. Because she never had a mother to show her how to deal with it fight back a little bit. My hope for camp initailly was that she will understand there are other kids in the same boat. She felt so alone at school like she was the only one. She knew other kids at school whose folks got divorced and stuff but she is like my mom died. She felt so alone and lonely and my hope was that she would go and see other kids have lost their moms or dads. No, they are not divorced they didn't walk out on them, they're dead. They want to be there but they

can't. That is helpful. Brett is not so outspoken. [undecipherable] It is actually meeting, playing with other kids not just hearing someone talk.

Tina: [undecipherable]

Gerald: Right. There are other kids there and they are your age and it has happened to them. You are not the only one. Going to O'Ki'Suya, seeing that interaction, hearing about that interaction, being in it helped me to [undecipherable].

Tina: Are there certain ways that [undecipherable]

Gerald: Well, if they all talk about it and have the Memory Boats and whatever. (pause) Something like that you can't make it happen. It is like quality time with your kids. I used to know an old, old truck driver who'd come in and say yep we'll give em quality time. We'd walk home and say we've got a half hour we are going to have quality time. And the same with this interaction, create sufficient space, being available, creating quiet time, being time. [undecipherable]

Tina: Creating structure and [undecipherable]

Gerald: Right. And it will come out. Kids I've discovered are very honest. Even this day, there's an old saying that kids are honest. They are very open and very humble. Don't underestimate kids. Create the environment and set the stage and let the kids go with it. They are very good therapists on their own. (pause) I think O'Ki'Suya meant a lot to them. It sometimes takes a child a day or two to open up and O'Ki'Suya [undecipherable] I think four or five days children would have a better chance of opening up to each other and to the counselors. Once you open up and do it a couple of times you are better at it. Just a little bit and a little bit and once you open it is kind of like hey I'm not going to get hurt, I'm not going to get made fun of, and other kids have seen who I am and realize I'm better off. [undecipherable] Yeah, I did get hurt and somebody else was just

as hurt as I am. There's no time table with openness [undecipherable].

Tina: That was another [undecipherable]

Gerald: [undecipherable]

Tina: [undecipherable, something about parents putting a lot of trust in the camp]

Gerald: Yep. Parents get them started and watch them go and just make sure no one loses an arm or draws blood or something. You know no bumps or bruises or nicks, but yeah I think the staff did very well they talk very highly of staff and counselors and of the cook. Which was important which I never really thought of either, but yeah good food [undecipherable]

Tina: Will you talk to me about how Gwen and Brett responded to the camp?

Gerald: It helped. It helped them out a lot. I thought they'd have a good time, but she always knows when she gets hurt there's other kids who've, I've really watched Gwen, and Brett is in her face, [undecipherable] Camp is just right, he is still there but in his own space.
[undecipherable]

Tina: [undecipherable]

Gerald: [undecipherable, something about if I yell at them or raise my voice too loud]

Tina: [undecipherable]

Gerald: That is about all I can add

Tina: So if you were in charge of Camp O'Ki'Suya what would you say would be the most valuable thing to do?

Gerald: Letting them have fun with each other. And yet time for Memory Boats and just quiet time for unstructured conversation together.

Tina: And good food.

Gerald: And good food. Those are the most important parts I can give, give them the chance to have fun with others who've had someone die, give them some quiet, listen to everybody telling stories, low on structure with some specific things.

Tina: I really appreciate all your ideas.

Gerald: I hope it helps you.

CARLI: PARENT INTERVIEW 1998

Tina: Carli, I'd like to start with, How did you find out about Camp O'Ki'Suya?

Carli: Name (another camper's parent).

Tina: Okay.

Carli: And the first thing she said to me when, the day we met, was, "Oh and you've got to go to camp, or you've got to send Annie to camp". Just that Pippen had loved it and that they'd let him in a year early um just because the time was right and he needed something like that and he loved it. So when Annie and Pippen got together then Pippen just reinforced that he loved it and "yeah, you've got to go Annie".

Tina: So it was word of mouth [undecipherable].

Carli: Because really I had no intention of getting involved in this kind of thing for myself for myself or for my kids. Bereavement stuff? Don't want it, don't need it, and I have a real hesitation about doing much in terms of seeing a psychologist or whatever, a counselor even is a hard thing for me to want to do. I think I'd rather just heal myself, heal my family, not go out. But it was wonderful.

Tina: So it sounds almost ideal that you got to know someone who had gone to camps.

Carli: And Rose, her personality is such that, she is a good salesperson.

Tina: So when you heard about camp, you mentioned that you have a lot of hesitation of reaching out to counselors or whoever, what were your hopes and expectations of camp?

Carli: Well one of the things that Rose said was that they don't emphasize their mourning process or the tears. That, that is a fun camp and that you offer activities that help you remember and

counselors are available and that was most appealing to me because Annie has spent 6,7,8 months not getting a lot of attention, not having much fun, going through one stressful event after another, and I wanted her to have fun and I felt comfortable knowing that if she really needed to talk or if one of these remembering activities hit a nerve that there were people that could take care of her. That felt comforting.

Tina: And yet she had [undecipherable]

Carli: Yes. Yes. [pause] One thing for Annie is she is so complex. She doesn't talk a lot about Mariah [deceased sister] or that experience and I guess I've most recently decided that it just hurts too much and that to bring that out in language diminishes her experience somehow for her. She is terribly offended when people ask about what happened or "oh, I've heard you've lost your sister" or whatever because she feels it is so private and so big that no one else needs that information. But there was something in the way that Rose described camp that reassured me that she wasn't going to be pushed into something that she couldn't handle and that people wouldn't be nosy about it. This level playing field that everyone has gone through something terrible here, and we are going to try and have fun even though, so.

Tina: And the other thing that you expressed is that there are other ways to process things that are not verbal

Carli: Again, I keep referring to Rose but she has just taught me so much because she is just so far ahead of me in the process, she's like four years I think, but she talked about her kids as they develop and mature they go through a new process every year and I've got Leah at one level that she seems to be processing in such a healthy outward way and then Annie at this other level and I hope it is healthy but I really don't know because she's processing it inside so much. I don't think she is ignoring it because there will be times when weeping moments when

[undecipherable]. "Hi Annie", "Oh I'm just thinking about Mariah" so I know it is there.

Tina: [undecipherable]

Carli: Yeah. And it is hard for me not to want to go tromping in there "so do we need to talk about something?" you know.

Tina: Invite me into your inner world.

Carli: Yeah. Yeah. And she has been keeping journals for about two years now and it has been very tempting for me to get in to those but I figure that if I breach that now I may not quit when she is a teenager and my hope is that she is doing her work. And I did notice that she has these sketch books and there are a lot of angels.

Tina: Is that angel theme a new one?

Carli: I'm still processing that one, too. She um, I mean that was the first thing she said to me when I got to camp, Mom, I saw an angel. And I just went storming by where are your counselors, I would really like a context for this, I thought maybe there had been a movie or a story or maybe she was dreaming. At this point I think she had a pretty real experience, but I don't know where to put that but then I don't have to put that anywhere. Finally it was hers and it was totally real to her and that's nothing that I can say one thing or another about that would make any sense to anybody. [laughter]

Tina: [undecipherable]

Carli: I mean I don't know anybody who has seen angels. You hear stories or this or that or myths. There is no explanation I figure it was real or she wouldn't have brought it up. She doesn't tend to just out of the blue make things up or lie in such profound ways.

Tina: [undecipherable]

Carli: Yeah. I really appreciated the counselors who responded to my questions that day. I guess I was expecting some sort of judgement call on their part and I can't remember their names but the first counselor I talked to said, after I said I'd like a context for this, she responded by saying, "there was an energy in my cabin that night, I couldn't even sleep". Oh. Ok. She didn't say anything, she didn't say whether or not Annie did, but that was her experience of the evening, and then the other counselor that had talked to Annie right after words said that, "Annie experienced something, that is for sure, because she was shaking like a leaf". But even for those people to be able to validate the experience in the ways that they did was very meaningful to me and reassured me that whatever, whatever Annie's going through that she really was in good hands. They were probably more reassuring to her than I would have been had I been there that night because I very likely would have pooh-poohed that experience.

Tina: You appreciated their response, thinking about how you would have responded, or how you could have chosen to respond.

Carli: And it has been interesting to see how she goes about it, too because at first she was telling everyone, but people really, like my dad, her grandfather, "well you've got to watch out Annie, you never know". There was something about bad spirits, too there. And my response to him was, first of all, "Annie, I need the phone" but that how can she watch out for something like this? It was totally beyond her control and it wasn't like she was asking for it but because of the responses she has gotten which has been incredibly varied, she has stopped telling people about it.

Tina: That was one of the [undecipherable].

Carli: Yeah.

Tina: [undecipherable]

Carli: Right, right.

Tina: I started asking you some about what your hopes, what hopes or expectations you had about [undecipherable].

Carli: Hmmm. Well just what I shared with you, she had a great time. She felt comfortable and I think in those ways it completely met any hopes I had for the camp. I think just given the little bit of interaction that I had with the counselors just in the sort of debriefing that we had before we all went home, I really appreciated the staff and they were above and beyond my expectations. One woman in Annie's cabin was a, is a trained psychologist, does a lot of counseling, I really didn't expect that. And I knew from the literature that you had or from Rose that there going to be counselors there that had some training but I didn't really expect that to that extent. I don't really know what else to say because I just wasn't there to get my hands in it all.

Tina: [undecipherable] What were your thoughts about how involved you were or how the families were invited into the camp?

Carli: I liked to be able to be there for that last bit, um and to have a chance to talk to the counselors. I think that I would have liked to know what sort of activities went on each day so I could say, "Annie, when you did this, what was that about?" or you know, but as it was I could just say, "so what did you do at camp?" and she just said, "oh, we just had a great time". You know, she is a private person and she is becoming more so. It is harder to pull out that kind of information. And I think too, that some of these things that I'm sure were very special like that walk.

Tina: The memory trail?

Carli: The memory trail, I know from what the counselors said and from what Annie said, that was a tough experience for her and I think if I had a little

better insight of what that was about and what that was about and how it was presented that we could talk about those things, too.

Tina: [Undecipherable]

Carli: Right. And then even to be able to recall, let's say if we had a list, these are the activities we are planning on this day. If we as parents could go back and just ask those questions, if they were good, positive, we could bring them up again and again and they can sink deeper and not be forgotten.

Tina: That's great. That is a great idea, not just a list but also the overall idea behind things.
[undecipherable]

Carli: Oh I think just one thing that I've experienced myself, when I go away on some religious retreats that I have been to, uh. One of the things they do for us is have family write letters and so I think that would have been a nice touch to that, too. Just something I know was a wonderful surprise to be able to get a little reassurance from home, "we're fine, and we miss you" and you know just a little note to have.

Tina: [undecipherable]

Carli: I think I kind of like the idea of camp being very separate from life, too. They so need a release and to be wild and free and away from all that heaviness because it's right back on them when they get home.

Tina: [undecipherable, something about balance]

Carli: Which is the nature of just going to camp anyway. It's going to be fun, it is going to be a relief, out of mom's hair and she's out of mine.
[laughter]

Tina: Yeah, some of these things we've already touched on but I'd like to hear more about how you would say Annie responded to the camp experience?

- Carli: Very well, I think. I don't think there was a struggle on any front for her. She really enjoyed herself. I think she likes the extra attention. You know, when you are new to a person you can't help but allow yourself to be more absorbed in them and I think she really, not wallows, but she really gets into that attention, just appreciating me for who I am.
- Tina: Did you notice any behavioral or emotional changes?
- Carli: Yes it was a very flying high ride on the way home and she's feeling very grown-up in the way that she is treating her sister and her aunt, very loving and sweet and trying hard not to get in any fights with her, and after a few days [laughter] it's back to normal. But that was a good high.
- Tina: [undecipherable]
- Carli: The maturity, she seemed, she behaved more maturely when she came home.
- Tina: What do you attribute that to?
- Carli: Feeling loved and accepted and good about herself so she is strong and she can go back into the fight of things "I can handle this" [laughter]
- Tina: "I can even handle camp for four days"
- Carli: Yeah, and I think being away from Mom and not having that person baby you or "you've got to do this, you gotta", reminding you all the time, but to make so many choices that are all hers. Whether or not she is going to shower, whether or not she is going to brush her hair or wear clean socks, those are choices that she is really not allowed to make very often, or if she does the wrong one and her mother doesn't like it, "Annie, put on fresh socks", so I am always interfering with those choices. At camp she is free to choose and that is very empowering.

Tina: It will be interesting to see after six months, the series of camps she has gone to [undecipherable]

Carli: I don't know, I'm just so not into the therapy thing. Therapy is a good thing in the right context, I don't want it, yet. But I know it is good for my children. For this camp and any camp that I would want my daughters to go to that dealt with them on such an emotional way or more deeply than just a go play, have fun sort of camp, I think you've got it all. I think that you have a large, loving well-trained staff is number one as far as I am concerned and any other, the place you have it, it is not going to matter, unless it is unsafe right. And finally even the activities that you do can vary so hugely. There are lots of good ways to help kids remember and there are lots of good ways to have fun.

Tina: That is helpful to hear. There are a lot of outdoor based programs and [undecipherable].

Carli: It really is. Well I think had that cabin been filled with just the student who lovingly volunteered time that would have been fine, but it would have been a far different experience for Annie. Just even her little angel, that little day in time, who knows how that would have gone. (Counselor name), now she was the one that really surprised me with that energy from the cabin phrase and we talked for quite awhile and she is someone that I would like my kids to go visit with regularly because she allows them just to be, and is very accepting and loving about it and isn't passing on these judgement calls, where I think it would be easier to say some off-handed, "you were dreaming" or "you've been drinking too much soda", but someone trained doesn't brush that off.

Tina: So the differences in responses.

Carli: Yeah, and I think those responses.

Tina: Anything else that you would change?

Carli: Yeah, the food, way too much sugar.

Tina: Do you want to say more about that?

Carli: We are becoming increasingly health conscious for probably pretty obvious reasons, and I guess when, one of the things I control most for my children is that they, especially sugar and food additive type stuff. And when they are at camp they have free reign and when they haven't had that freedom before, Annie, especially at Camp Mak-a-Dream, she got out of hand and came home with you know, a face full of cold sores and I guess I wish there were a little more control on the counselors side in terms of the food the kids have access to. You don't have to reward them with sugar at every meal or every snack. And that was something that even Joshua (husband) struggled with when I was away people would bring meals and they'd bring liters of soda and pie and cake and we never ate that stuff, never, but if it is there and you don't have time to even think about where the laundry is let alone what we're going to make for dinner, well, you eat it.

Tina: That is an important one. Anything else.

Carli: Well those are those comfort foods, and we want to reward people if they are suffering, you know, feed them, and don't feed them salads and fruits and all those healthy things, they might become too weighted down.

Tina: It is really helpful to hear your input.

JENNIFER: PARENT INTERVIEW 2000

Tina: I have some ideas I want to touch on today but if things come up or you have ideas of what is important then we can go in whatever direction. How did you find out about Bereavement Camp?

Jennifer: Well, I told you earlier on, before the kids went to seasons that I had gone to the author that was supposed to be there from Baltimore or wherever she was from. A friend of mine told me about that and said I should go so I went. I saw the pictures of camp and recognized that the season's program was definitely something that I wanted the kids to go through. After we finished seasons I realized that camp was next. And they were very willing, more than willing wanted to go.

Tina: So hearing about camp, how you described it your kids were enthused about it.

Jennifer: Yeah and had they not been I wouldn't have pushed it. George had another friend who lost a dad and I encouraged his mother to send him to seasons and to the camp and she said he was absolutely not willing to do anything, he was kind of tucking himself away. He didn't want to expose anything.

Tina: So this felt like a fit for your kids but not necessarily for everybody. So talk about as a parent, knowing a Bereavement Camp exists it is still a big decision to allow your kids to participate. Can you describe that process to me of how you allowed them to participate?

Jennifer: After going through seasons and talking to the counselors there and feeling very comfortable with them, that was what did it for me. I was familiar with the people. Had I not been familiar with the people I probably would have questioned a few things.

Tina: But the fact that some of the camp staff is also Seasons personnel, you knew the type.

Jennifer: Yeah and they kind of gave it a good thing, they described it to the kids and told them how much fun it is and showed them the pictures. I think that helped.

Tina: You brought up the pictures a couple of times. I think it can be important for people to have the visual image of something that was important. So you heard about camp O'Ki'Suya as it was, and A Camp to Remember as it became, and what were your hopes or expectations? Or what your children would get out of the camp experience.

Jennifer: I was hoping for Brittany, who when all of this happened started to tuck everything in and didn't really outwardly show any kind of emotion other than misbehaving. And she isn't misbehavior she is a pleaser. So for her to go to the opposite end of the spectrum I thought there must be something out there that she can tap into and that she need. And, not necessarily coming from her mother because I was trying to do it all. It is nice to have the outside resources to fall back on and know that she is safe with other people and that I will be ok because that is a big concern for her now. When my mother leaves, will she come back? And for George I guess it was just to know that it was ok to cry, he was the crier and the writer and the talker. Sometimes until two or three in the morning. So just to reiterate the fact that, again, not just coming from mother, it is ok for you to cry it is ok to show these feelings. Other people accept that too, and they have been through it too. That is what I wanted them to know that they weren't alone.

Tina: To be in a place where other children have gone through similar things. Having the support coming from somewhere outside of the family and to reiterate the support that is coming from giving permission to the feelings. Tell me more about Brittany's misbehavior, what did that look like?

Jennifer: Defiant, or asking her to do something and her always saying No. And that never happened before. She was always very willing, a self-motivator and

then all of a sudden she didn't want to do it, or she was sometimes mean to her friends. Never before had I ever seen anything like that. People would say is she always happy, does she always smile? And we would say yes she is. We rarely saw her in a bad mood. And then suddenly the bad moods started to surface.

Tina: Some bad moods and some meanness at times. How did you hope that camp would fit in with that?

Jennifer: Just allowing her the opportunity to see that it is ok and things will be ok again and maybe seeing kids that have been through this a few years earlier and had come back to camp. So they might be able to express.

Tina: Yeah, different kids at different stages.

Jennifer: And it is definitely a process and to explain that to a child is very difficult because they are kind of in the here and now.

Tina: And you had acknowledged that it would be nice to have the support come from the outside too because you were trying to do it all. That is a lot on a parent. Coming away from camp, how did it fit with your hopes and expectations?

Jennifer: They were so enthused about going back and even with George's little mishap, he was ready to go back. When the pictures, they took their cameras. They begged every day please take the cameras, we had to shoot some more on George's because he wasn't done. So Brittany was impatient waiting for that. And they were thrilled with the stuffed animals. That was really a nice touch. A really nice surprise for kids who are maybe going away for the first time. I would think that losing a parent and then seeing a parent walk away leaving you at this unknown place, would be difficult.

Tina: And leaving their primary support system behind. That is helpful for me to hear what sort of things you feel like help make that possible or help them feel able or supported to do that. So the stuffed animals were one thing that you saw?

Jennifer: Very wonderful. I just thought that was great, and of course they didn't know that they got to keep them. They just walked into the cabin and there they were, and I said oh look they have some little animals to greet you and I just assumed that you used them every year. Then they said oh we get to keep these.

Tina: They were big animals this year weren't they.

Jennifer: Yes they were. They were quite thrilled so that was nice. And they were, I guess you should never down play food, but the kids were really excited about the food.

Tina: The food was important.

Jennifer: Well, it is and George before was never a big eater but ever since the accident he really could care less about eating, still! He will realize about eleven o'clock at night that he's hungry. But other than that he tries to stay so focused and for him the camp was a really good thing because George doesn't have many kids on the block his age that are boys. He is surrounded by girls in the house. He is surrounded by girls on the block. So finally this year he has found a buddy who lives a block up and they have spent day in and day out together. So I think part of that came from realizing that at camp he found friendships, he found kids that he could relate to that were his age.

Tina: Having the same age peers and being around a group of guys. I want to hear more about that and I want to hear more about what they said about the food. How did you know that it was important to them?

Jennifer: Well, first because, is it Matt?

Tina: Yeah, Matt was the cook.

Jennifer: They could say nothing but good about Matt and how funny he was and how much they enjoyed him. In fact, they said why don't we go eat at Del's

Place? So I knew that it had to be important. And I asked George, Did you eat? And he said yeah I ate, it was great food. So I don't know if he did or not but he says that he did and to me as a mother knowing he doesn't eat it is really important. I am going to hire Matt to come over.

Tina: The friendship groups you described as well, has George spoke about the friends he made at camp?

Jennifer: Yeah, well (camp counselor name) goes to our church and she has Randy (camper) come quite often with her to church because he is a friend of her sons. After (Brittany and George's dad name) was killed she said this is Randy and I think you should introduce George to him because he has been through a similar situation. Well you know how the crowd gets big and you can't find them, so actually we never had officially introduced them until camp and now I see pictures and pictures of Randy. And George is just thrilled to know him.

Tina: And they have that lasting connection of going to the same church so they will see each other. Other things about how the camp fit with your hopes and expectations? It sounds like you felt that the kids were welcomed and the kids were taken care of with the food and the peer groups that filled were really important.

Jennifer: The counselors were great too. Don't let that fall by the wayside. That was very important and it was nice for me to know that they knew a few people there. That was comforting to walk away. But after picking them up and seeing how great they were welcomed and I think that is important for a kid. To know that they are accepted and know that things will be okay.

Tina: To feel that there is a place where you are really accepted.

Jennifer: Yeah, well I teach school and every day 21 little faces look at me and I have to say I love you all. I do think as a kid and as an adult you need to have that safety net.

Tina: How would you describe Bereavement Camp's mission? What the goal is of the camp?

Jennifer: From an outsider's prospective I see that you want kids to continue the process, to know that what they are going through is normal, but to relate that to the peer group. Just relating with someone who has been there.

Tina: How you described how camp met your hopes and expectations it sounds really similar. It met those goals. How would you say it could better meet those goals or more affectivity facilitate childhood grief?

Jennifer: Well I guess not being there day in and day out that is a hard question to answer. I also feel that it was important, not to elude your question but just going back, that the kids know that their life goes on and in knowing this it is still ok to do things. So going to camp and kind of breaking away from the home safety but knowing that if they go somewhere else it will still be okay.

Tina: That seems important. You are describing the importance of a child's awareness that your life is not stopping now because the person you cared for so deeply has died. But how are you going to take this experience? It will still be with you and go on. So camp has provided a safe place for kids to go and take that risky step out of the home safety.

Jennifer: Take that risk, absolutely. And also, to talk about it. Backing up a little farther, Brittany had an experience at school right after everything happened where on Fridays the kids would talk about their dads and she never got called on. For a very long time, she didn't tell me and she would come home and say that she hated her teacher. And I had never heard that before. So finally I got what was disturbing her out of her and I said you have many things to talk about your dad. Things he did with you and for you and you can tell your teacher that it is okay, you

would like to talk about him. So she did, she mustered up the courage and said she would like to talk about my dad. Which I was proud of her for, I think that camp is a place that the kids feel they can talk about it. I think that it is a good place to really let those feelings out. It is okay.

Tina: That is an amazing example of thinking how different places in a child's life they feel permission to talk or they don't but it is hard to sort through their feelings so Brittany's came out as a hate. It is a challenge, but you as an aware parent, were able to sort through that.

Jennifer: I just think that it is so important. As the sole provider now, you have to recognize that kids have things to say. We filter a lot of what we talk about. That is why with this two or three in the morning thing I finally put my foot down and said I would love to talk to you and I will talk to you about anything but it had to be at a different time of day because we are losing sleep and it is not good for either one of us.

Tina: How has that worked out?

Jennifer: It has worked out. I think that he is hesitant because he gets so busy during the day that he forgets that he has things that he wants to talk about. Then when it is down time he has a tough time going to sleep so of course when the rest of us are out he is just laying there thinking and crying and I will wake up. Sometimes he would be yelling, why?

Tina: How has he responded to the camp experience? Have you noticed changes since he has come home?

Jennifer: I don't know, it could be due to the camp but I see him maturing in ways that I didn't ever really have hopes of George doing. He is very immature. He is one of those kids that would be a kid forever if he could. So there are things that are coming into play that look like he may be growing up and taking on some responsibility.

Tina: Can you give me an example of that?

Jennifer: Well, he is very carefree in everything that he does. Now for instance, taking an ice cream bowl, that he just got at Baskin Robbins and wondering if he tips it upside down if it will stay in the bowl. So, things like this, he is and experimenter. And is accident-prone things just happen to him. Then most recently is if I say, George, you can go to a friend's but you have to be home by eight thirty and if you are not home by eight thirty you must call me. He has been right on, every time, never before. We were searching. So it is kind of nice to have that little tad bit of responsibility. I am wondering how long it will last. I think camp was helpful, did they have jobs to do, were they responsible for things that had to be done.

Tina: Yes they did.

Jennifer: Well good.

Tina: We called them capers because it sounds more fun than jobs. So that seems like something that you think is an important part of camp?

Jennifer: Well for George I think it is very important and I think for all kids it is important to have responsibility. He got a hair cut the other day and he swept the hair. So, you know. He is thinking about things a little bit more. That could be due to the fact that the time before he was getting his hair cut he pumped the chair all the way off the thing and he was trying to make up for that.

Tina: Yeah and certainly nothing is completely attributable to camp and I do see that as one small component in all the different interventions in a child's life and I am hoping to understand how to structure that most effectively for most people. Another thing that you spoke about was the difficulty that a child would have stepping away from their support system to go to camp. Do you have ideas about the

length of time of camp of what seems ideal?
Longer, shorter, how many days away make sense?

Jennifer: I definitely do not think longer. I think you are very wise doing it three full days and having to decide. That seems about right and I would think that would be about right for counselors.

Tina: It seems like it is working well for people.

Jennifer: Yeah, I don't think you want to overkill it. Kids are different. Some could be away for weeks but in a situation like that where they are coming away from a safety net I don't think you would want to do it any longer. And, due to the topic that you are focusing on I think after that many days it is probably going to be overload and you might get the anger part of it. You know, I don't want to talk about this any more, I am done with it, please just leave me alone.

Tina: And a child would feel pushed. At camp originally in 97-98 and both in 99 were two full days with half days on either side and had almost everyone saying that it was too short so playing with it was tough. So it is helpful to hear your feed back.

Jennifer: I think three full days is great but that is not to say that four would be any less great I just think that you get wore out and I think there are a lot of sleepless nights for counselors and kids. You know the nights are short and the days are long.

Tina: Did your kids come home tired and exhausted?

Jennifer: Not necessarily but I expected them to be. I didn't notice it too much, of course they were home just a short time before they traipsed off again. And after that it was definitely too much.

Tina: And you told me a little bit about that earlier do you want to talk about Brittany's response to camp or what you saw in her second camp experience.

Jennifer: Well, just the fact that, I guess part of it had to do with that she had her tonsils out and went in. And she would never say that this bothered her, but I know that it did. We know the doctor, I think he knows the situation, I just assumed that he did. Brittany was on the phone to someone who had called to say good luck and she was talking and the doctor said, "Oh, was that your dad." And right away I could see this wall going up, she was thinking no that was not my dad but I wish my dad was here. Look around, everyone else has a dad. I think that probably struck a nerve so she had the tonsils out then she went to stay with my mom while she healed because that is what she wanted to do. But she called me everyday saying please come get me, I don't want to be here anymore, which is not like her either.

Tina: Where is your mom?

Jennifer: She is in Chinook, which is six hours away so it is pretty difficult. At that point she was sick and she couldn't go swimming, she couldn't do the things George was doing because he was with her and he was off doing all of these things. I think that bothered her. So then going to camp, being there, then going to church camp, I think she thought, is my mom trying to get rid of me. I am sure she had a feeling of not being wanted. She was very distant for a while. Brittany is usually really huggy, feely, and touchy. She was not attention giving, she was very distant. So I do think that was part of it. But that is not to say that your camp was too long, it was just a few days, so I know that wasn't the cause, it was just the conglomeration.

Tina: That is part of her reaction to camp or her reaction after camp. Being really tearful and wanting you real close.

Jennifer: I do think that she wants Darrell more than me. She is just wishing that he would be there or that he would come pick her up.

Tina: You described somehow that you felt like her being around her peers and friends at camp and

their emotions influenced her differently at camp than away from camp. Can you describe that?

Jennifer: Ok. Refresh me.

Tina: You mentioned how at the second camp she was really tearful and cried a lot at camp and you had some ideas of how that came about.

Jennifer: Oh, yes because I think when she was at A Camp to Remember she wanted to be strong, maybe not even consciously, but she was given the strength to say, hey, this has happened to me and I will deal with it and go on. And so (a camp counselor) said to me, you know other kids were really crying at the end and I kept looking at Brittany and she would say (camp counselor name), do I have to cry. Thinking that maybe it was something that she was supposed to do and maybe feeling a little guilty that she wasn't then going on to this other camp. This camp is a church camp and I am sure it brings out a lot of things too. She cried herself to sleep every night.

Tina: Did she describe that to you or did the counselors.

Jennifer: She didn't, the mother of one of the campers called me and said I thought you should know that my daughter told me that there wasn't a night when Brittany didn't cry herself to sleep. She probably tried to hide it. And topics of dads came up in the cabin because I asked her to see what may have brought this on. She was so used to going to the lake and water skiing and stuff with her dad and suddenly there is [tape cut off while flipping over].

Jennifer: I tried to stay busy, there is no doubt about it, I tried to make this a summer because they were so used to going to the lake and that was their summer. I knew that if we didn't do something that it could be disastrous.

Tina: You had to define for your family unit now what summer is going to be.

Jennifer: Definitely and I didn't want them hiding out and feeling sorry. I just didn't want them to feel that intense pain of not having him there and not being able to do that and then being resentful. And that is where the anger, you know I was just trying to avoid the anger. I was trying to avoid the pain as much as they were. So we made sure that we were busy enough. And not necessarily going places you know. What would you like to do today, should we going swimming, hang out with friends. Options.

Tina: So that goes back to your idea of wanting to make sure they are aware that there life is moving on?

Jennifer: Definitely, because you see things about kids that even adults who have had lost will give up. They can't ever find the will or necessity to pick themselves up and say I must go on and that is scary because my kids are at the ages where they could have easily slipped into that mode. They were very close to him.

Tina: So you as a parent feel a lot of obligation to make sure that they don't go that direction that rather they incorporated this experience into their lives.

Jennifer: And as I described to them, you will not be the last kids on earth to lose a parent in fact someone else lost one the very same day or the next day. That you don't even know about, so think about everything that you felt and will feel and someday maybe you can help someone else through this experience. And we even talked about the PALS (Peers-as-leaders, adolescent program) at camp, you could go be a PAL.

Tina: Many campers do.

Jennifer: And that is important I think.

Tina: The last comment that I made on here was that I just wondered your sense, and I know you weren't at camp so you don't have an idea of all the different components of the program. But, as a parent and from the little bits that you have

heard, what do you feel like are the most important components of a Bereavement Camp?

Jennifer: Probably the fact that they can share their feelings in many different ways and the coming together of a community where there is a common denominator. I guess what I appreciate is the positive, looking at things in a positive way instead of in a negative way. I very much appreciate that and I think that it was. I think things were dealt with positively and not negatively.

Tina: So a variety of different feelings and that coming together, the group bonding. And, not dwelling on the negative but also awareness of the positive things.

Jennifer: Right, I mean speaking the truth, but speaking it in a positive way. Death doesn't have to be negative, it is painful and it hurts and it must be excruciating for a kid when they can't process everything. But to have people there as a trampoline, to let them bounce off you.

Tina: Great, any suggestions or things you want me to know or be aware of?

Jennifer: As of now I say only positive.

Tina: As you think of things or hear things or want me to be aware of anything, feel free to call me.

Jennifer: I will. I will.

Tina: It is something that I am very committed to. It is interesting to hear you acknowledge the different stages as kids come together at various places and how that can be helpful for other children. And how you can anticipate it for your own children being able to be models for other campers. That seems to make an argument for combining the ages and keeping the groups together as much as possible.

Jennifer: I really do think it is good. They have their own little age group basically in the cabins and when they spread out are they intermingling?

Tina: At this point there are small group activities and large group activities and groups and meals. Meals are everyone, campfires are everyone, and some small groups are just for a couple age groups.

Jennifer: I do think that that is good. I think that some kids go and they are petrified and if they are a small child and they have got older kids that could be really intimidating. So I do think that they could lose their voice a little bit.

Tina: Large group activities are based by camp program. Like youth, middle, etc. So it weaves in and out and that is what gives us the flexibility to say how do we weave this together most effectively. Reflection time is just with the cabin. As a parent would it be helpful if you had more of this information? Do you feel you needed more of this information as far as what are the kids doing at camp?

Jennifer: I guess what I had anticipated, when they got finished I expected them to have something. They had there folders and I am opening them like a mother would open homework and go ok where is it. I was looking for something concrete when a lot of it was done there. The art projects were great, they loved them. That part of it was great. I wish I could delve into what they were thinking because sometimes they don't tell me. So I was looking for concrete and they didn't have it in there folders.

Tina: Would that be more helpful for you as a parent?

Jennifer: I think it would. As with Season's . . . you know everything was kind of it won't go any farther than this, which is good in a way, but as a parent you want to know so you can help.

Tina: So more of a tangible product that may be some drawing or writing that makes it in their

notebook for sure so they could share it with the parent. At the exit interview did you have an opportunity to hear your children's reactions to what they did at camp? Did they tell you very much or not?

Jennifer: It was very simple, this is what I worry about when you interview them. That they just say yes, no, and I don't know. So it was pretty to the point and not really informative. I was thinking that they could say more.

Tina: What do you attribute that to?

Jennifer: I don't know, maybe they were just ready to go.

Tina: Do you think it would have been different if they weren't together?

Jennifer: It could have been and maybe with me not sitting there. They were probably careful of what they said because I was sitting there.

Tina: It is interesting to think about because I want to hopefully bring the parent into the dialogue a little but that changes it, too.

Jennifer: Well, you know how sometimes they just don't want to say anything.

Tina: So, do you have any other thoughts about how to better help the experience generalize back home? Or to integrate parents into camp when they arrive.

Jennifer: Well that part of it was good. I liked that part. You know, drop them off and kiss them goodbye. I am just a believer that if you linger and you hang on, your kids act differently. I think, breaks away I don't think you want to bring them in. I think it was done well and the exit interviews were done well. The coming together with the meal and the little program, that was wonderful. That does give us some insight as to the kids and what was done. Because every time you gave out a certificate you explained a little about why and how.

Tina: So you got a glimpse at that?

Jennifer: Yeah, that was fine.

Tina: But helping the child's individual experience generalize back home, or help the parent understand what the child's experience was.

Jennifer: Just having the exit interview was good. And maybe having those one or two pieces of paper in the folder.

Tina: I am wondering if your kids usually do more drawing or writing if it was maybe a surprise?

Jennifer: No, it wasn't a surprise, it is exactly what I thought camp would be but I thought that maybe in one small group they would be writing or doing these things.

Tina: That is helpful to hear.

Jennifer: They had a great time even with George's mishap. They both want to come back.

Tina: Do you feel like the mishap is taken care of or do you want to describe it anymore?

Jennifer: I think it is taken care of. He explained it to people, in fact one of the camper's moms said; she couldn't believe it because when she left he was all scraped up from being hit by the car. So when she saw this she just shook her head. But he was very good about describing to people and I just let him. He grew from it.

Tina: As he describes it now do you think he has grown from it?

Jennifer: Yeah, I do.

Tina: Thank you so much.

ANN: PARENT INTERVIEW 2000

- Tina: Feel free to throw in any thoughts or ideas but there are some basic questions that I have that will help guide our discussion. My goal overall is just to have as great of an understanding as possible of your experience with bereavement camp. So, how did you find out about camp?
- Ann: Through Seasons.
- Tina: And when you heard . . .
- Ann: From Sally, can I say that?
- Tina: Oh, as I said, I just change all the names on the tape so you can say whatever.
- Ann: From Sally, she spoke very highly of it.
- Tina: So, through Season's program, from a camper's parent.
- Ann: She was doing Seasons the same time as me.
- Tina: How did she describe camp?
- Ann: Oh Tina, I don't know, that was too long ago.
- Tina: I ask because I am constantly aware of the trust that you, as the parents offer the Bereavement Camp staff letting your child participate so I am curious about the initial perceptions that you had about what camp is about and what your expectations or hopes were.
- Ann: It seemed like it was like no matter what it was going to be a good experience. She would be with other kids who have experienced loss and that's no matter what else is going on that is the bottom line. There is really no other forum that I know of in society for that.
- Tina: That brings young children together, or children that have experienced loss.
- Ann: It is important. I get a sense that Mandy has, that there is also a sense of family to the camp from what she says about camp.
- (Silence)

Tina: That sounds really significant. When you think of yourself as a parent, you have heard about the camp and you decide to let Mandy go and participate, one of your hopes is that she be with other children or young people who have gone through a significant loss, the death of a family member. What other hopes of the camp did you have for Mandy?

Ann: I don't know. (pause) I didn't necessarily have many. To see that other kids have gone through it, you know, to see other kids cry. I didn't really have a lot of expectations but after the first time and I heard about some of the things that were done like the making boats, memory boats and sending them off and talking. She told me about it first. That it was a tearful experience [undecipherable]. I think there was only one person who didn't cry and I think that in a way is really more than I could have hoped for. That these children who are just spending three days together feel comfortable enough to cry in each other's presence. So that's not something that is easy for her, to cry directly related to loss. A lot of times that will come out but it is because she is angry or frustrated or not getting her way about something before she can cry.

Tina: To have the opportunity to allow the tears to come and to have the opportunity to be in the company [undecipherable]

Ann: [undecipherable] It also brings up many things.

Tina: So, can you talk a little about how having Mandy at camp fit with your expectations. How would you say camp fits with, how would you sum up how camp fits with your expectations?

Ann: It seems to be meeting them. (laughter). It is hard to say too much since I wasn't there I have heard little bits. It is definitely a really good.

Tina: How did Mandy respond to the camp experience.

Ann: She seemed to enjoy herself. This is really the only camp experience she has had. She really enjoys being away from me and with other kids, they get to play, as well as being emotionally supported.

Tina: Have you noticed any changes since camp, which you attribute to camp?

- Ann: When she came back she wasn't happy because it was over.
- Tina: If you were in charge of the camp or in charge of consulting and directing, how it would be, what do you see as the most important components of Bereavement Camp?
- Ann: I think to keep, just from what I sense and what I have gathered to keep monitoring [undecipherable]. It seems like there is a good balance of what could be called regular camp stuff like treasure hunts, and you know hiking, and other stuff swimming, and all that fun stuff with the memory boats and the memory trail. Did you make things again this year? Remember there was that place at the old camp at Georgetown Lake and there was a Memory Trail?
- Tina: The trail through the woods.
- Ann: You did that again. I think that is important. It is hard to say if I would change anything because I don't know everything but I think you do a good job. I remember somebody once said, an acquaintance asking me what my daughter was doing and I said going to a camp with bereaved kids and the person was like, well she is going to do something fun too right, well what about fun? (Laughter) I told them that it was fun. They are having fun.
- Tina: To many people, when they hear it is a Bereavement Camp, they may think that it is all sad or trying to make the children cry. Your sense it that it is important to have a fun camp experience, treasure hunts, hiking, swimming. But also, to have the opportunity for the memory boats, the memory trail and the times to share. I am so immersed in the program because I have been involved from the beginning that I think in some ways it is more difficult to share the experiences with me because we have a common understanding when we say "that place in the woods" we know what "that" was. But how to describe the importance to that to someone else is hard. How would you describe how the memory trail is important or what the memory trail is all about? Your understanding of it?
- Ann: It is giving honor to the people or the person that we loved and the relationship that we had. As far as I'm concerned, it is a way of affirming

that it is still a memory. A chance to create and challenge in a way, you come up with something natural, bark and leaves and stuff and pine, to do something that reminds you of the person that is gone. (Sigh and pause). Especially important in our situation in a way I guess. The memory trial because we weren't able to bury Shane's body so we don't have a place on the earth that we can go to. I mean we have spots like camping and stuff. So in a way it creates a memory spot. I'm not expressing myself well.

Tina: It is hard to find words. It sounds like part of the importance is having the opportunity to honor the person year after year, a place, and not to pretend like it is something we get over.

Ann: Yeah, and to acknowledge that it is not something that is ever just done. It is just that there is, well I am sure that it is different for everybody but I'm sure there are some similarities, they say time heals all wounds but I think it different, it is that you've gone that much longer.

Tina: We talked some about that you weren't sure what you would change or do different but in our conversation you had some ideas that we could add or ways to enhance the program. Like your ideas around the parent retreats.

Ann: Maybe the kids could do cooking stuff together. I liked what you did with the batik. A different [undecipherable]. I liked it. It is hanging in our house. Art is important. I think that I would like to see parents cooking together as part of the retreat experience. I am coming, that is coming from my perspective. I have difficulty being social so I like that, I do. I think it would be more conducive to conversation, it seems like most of the good talks go on in the kitchen.

Tina: To not just sit in a circle with the pressure.

Ann: Yeah, right.

Tina: To have a side-by-side conversation.

Ann: While chopping vegetables. I went to Durango camp and that was the best I had, when I was working in the kitchen.

Tina: Working with other people and it is creative also. It is helpful that I get your feedback, I really

appreciate it. Is there anything else that you want me to consider about your experience or Mandy's experience with bereavement camp?

(Pause)

Ann: No, I'm thinking. No, not really.

Tina: Thank you.

CALLIE: PARENT INTERVIEW 2000

Tina: I have some questions I want to make sure I ask but feel free to share anything that comes to mind as we talk about their experience with camp. How did you find out about the Bereavement Camp?

Callie: [undecipherable]

Tina: Tell me about your [undecipherable]

Callie: She went to the first camp four years ago in 1997 so she has been to every one since. I suppose my decision, my concerns were whether I was meeting her needs or not or dealing with the loss. We didn't have any counseling or support after. So, that probably was part of the decision. Hoping she would [undecipherable] shuffling that experience under the rug or ignoring her feelings.

Tina: How would you describe camp?

Callie: I think that maybe two things that [undecipherable] the main one is that they realize that they are not alone in the loss. There are other children their age that have experience that loss. I think it gives them a safe opportunity to feel what they feel around the loss and express that.

[Conversation undecipherable]

Tina: So does that add to or compare with your hopes and expectations of camp? [undecipherable]

Callie: A couple of interesting things happened. The first year, I noticed the biggest change in that her father had passed away two years prior to that first camp and I think that up to the last day [undecipherable].