



Motherless Daughters
of Orange County

Sisters at Heart

A Publication of Motherless Daughters of Orange County,

Winter, 2007/2008

Volume 5, Issue 4



*Alone they might be washed away, but together they stand strong.
Thank you each for holding my hand somewhere along the way
when I was facing a wave of my own.
I hope you will reach for my hand when your own wave threatens.*

All of us girls...
Old and young...
Near and far...
Hold special memories of good times we've shared.
We've had our share of hard times
when our friends were there to make us feel better.
We've shared...
our hearts
our time
our secrets
our fears
our hopes
and our dreams.
Let us never break the chain of friends!



I am only as strong as the caffeine I drink,
the hair spray I use, and the girlfriends I have.

Thank God for our female friends, whether they are our closest girlfriends, favorite neighbors, co-workers, our sisters, or other special relatives. These ladies experience the good times with us, and just as important, the tough times. They listen, lend a helping hand or are just there for us, which can make all the difference in the world some days.

***Please join our 12th Annual
Motherless Daughters' Day Luncheon
Saturday, May 10, 2008
11:30a to 2:30p
Costa Mesa Country Club***

Featured speaker: Motherless Daughter and Author, Julie Buxbaum

***For reservation details and to purchase tickets,
please call Cathy Draeger
(714) 580-6668***

Message From Our President ~ Juanita Driskell



Hello Sisters at Heart,

It has been a while since our last newsletter because of unforeseen difficulties with putting one out. Our very able editor has been busy working on it, but life keeps getting in the way. Funny how that happens sometimes.

At any rate, a lot has happened in the interim. My wonderful husband set up a website for MDOC last summer and continues to help me maintain it. I hope by this time you have had a chance to visit the site.

The address is www.motherlessdaughtersoforangecounty.org. I know that is a long address, but keep in mind that is the name of our organization and that will hopefully help everyone remember the email address. We plan on adding on to the site as time goes by, and of course, updating features already there. So, please, check it out from time to time for news of upcoming events and reporting on recent events.

Speaking of events, last September, MDOC again participated in the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure held in Newport Beach at Fashion Island. MDOC rented a booth there to spread the word about our organization. I got there early and was joined later by Lucia Cusenza Palacios, Laura Gibson, Cami Black, Karen Stoller, Virginia Kennedy, and Amalia Wasserman.

There were quite a few people who stopped by our booth to see what we were all about, and we took down their names. So hopefully, we'll be able to meet these new ladies at our upcoming events.

In October, we held a new type of fundraiser for MDOC: a "Purse, Jewelry, and Scarf Party." The turnout was somewhat limited, but it was sure fun to shop!

Our Holiday Brunch in December was held at my house and was attended by about a dozen ladies, including yours truly. We had good food and good conversations about our moms and Christmas holidays of the past. Some tears were shed but it felt good to be in safe company to do so.

Our new friend, Amalia Wasserman, who I mentioned helping out at the Race for the Cure, is from the San Diego area. She has begun a chapter of Motherless Daughters in her area. She has booked a room at a local library once a month for a discussion group and has had several meetings so far. If you are interested and want to contact Amalia, her e-mail address is: arw22@peoplepc.com.

Last summer, I ordered new t-shirts for MDOC because the ones we had were very small and seemed to be tailored for young girls, which a lot of us are not any more. If you volunteer to work at an event, you will receive a complimentary shirt. These shirts are also available to be purchased at cost.

Cathy Draeger is heading up the committee for the twelfth annual, Motherless Daughters' Day luncheon. You should be getting your invitation soon, as it is scheduled for Saturday, May 10, 11:30a-2:30p. I look forward to it each year, as I know lots of you do too!

I hope to see you at the luncheon!

Juanita Driskell

MDOC President

Juanita@finewoodnthings.com

CLINICAL CORNER

By Laurie Lucas, LCSW

Girlfriends, Role Models and Diamonds

The Importance of Friendships in the Life of a Motherless Daughter

It's been said that diamonds are a girl's best friend.... we know that *really* isn't true even though diamonds are extraordinary. What IS exquisite and priceless are the female relationships that help women love and value themselves and feel confident in a difficult world... a world that was shattered for them when their mother died prematurely. Motherless daughters often feel like they do not "belong" or "fit" in the world the way others seem to. They routinely feel alone, lost and confused.

The lonely path of a motherless daughter has room for girlfriends and other females who have something (themselves) to offer the motherless daughter. Ironically, motherless daughters may avoid these very relationships because their low self-esteem and shame resulting from mother loss may have left them feeling unworthy of love or friendship, or perhaps they do not know how to be a girlfriend themselves, or because they cannot bear the fear of getting close to someone and risk more loss or abandonment.

Motherless Daughters often find themselves "female-challenged" both in the sense that they may not have had enough time with their mother to observe and learn what it means to be a female and they may also inherently mistrust women based on their experience with the ultimate abandonment: the premature death of a needed and loved mother.

This brief article is meant to encourage all motherless daughters to reach out to other women, to risk opening her heart to female friends and role models in order to develop a stronger sense of herself and value her unique contribution to the world.

The fundamental task of every daughter is to take the raw material of childhood and turn it into a cohesive adult self. The child who has lost her mother is deeply traumatized and unable to process her grief, let alone address the developmental assignment of maturing, if loving guidance and support is absent. Her natural exposure to female behavior and female identity often ends when her mother dies. Our feminine identity and capacity for emotional attachment always has its roots in our early relationship with our mother, beginning in infancy and developing throughout childhood and adolescence. It is understandable that motherless daughters who lose the person they are most attached to often feel confusion about both what it means to be a female and how females behave in a social world.

Without a mother to show the way, girlfriends and other female role models can provide needed feminine nurturing, companionship and help in addressing the issue of what it means to be a female: What does physical and emotional development look like to a female teen? What things are important for females to know? How does one define themselves as a female? What are the essential and non-essential things for a woman to know? How will a motherless daughter know how to be a mother? Motherless daughters routinely feel disadvantaged, inferior,

embarrassed, full of shame and confused about the broad aspects of femininity and what this means to them and those who love them.

Sadly, when step mothers and step sisters enter the life of a motherless daughter all too often competition, resentment and confusion are rampant in these complex relationships. The motherless daughter who is able to draw close to girlfriends and other maternal role models can often find a measure of acceptance and safety in those relationships for herself. What a sad paradox, then, that motherless daughters often shy away from enriching relationships with other women, having assumed the unconscious position that independence and self-reliance will serve her well by protecting her from feeling the crushing loneliness and overwhelming loss she has experienced so early in life.

Emotionally healthy girlfriends and other female role models accept us as we are, enjoy us and take our side when necessary. Sometimes they share their mothers with us. Girl talk provides opportunities to explore the topics of men, makeup, fashion, relationships, homemaking, careers, spirituality and meaning. These women invite trust, openness, safety, fun, acceptance and the exploration of life shared with a "sister."

The recovery from mother loss is not a single step process by any means. It is a long journey with many steps - all requiring courage and risk. Motherless Daughters of Orange County seeks to provide a supportive fellowship of women whose lives have been profoundly touched by early mother loss. We hope you will join us in some of our events. When you are ready to share your story and yourself we will be ready to listen. Treat yourself to friendship with others who understand the unique path motherless daughters find themselves on.

If you have not already read [Motherless Daughters, The Legacy of Loss](#) by Hope Edelman, this is a must read to begin understanding the life-long impact and trauma of an early mother loss. Psychotherapy is another opportunity to explore this traumatic event in the safe environment of a trained and caring professional. In any event, you are not alone and the journey need not be treacherous if you will join hands with others.

Lastly, if you look around and find that you have some of these remarkable girlfriends, mentors and role models in your life...be very grateful for each one of them.

~ Laurie Lucas, LCSW
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Email: llucas@uci.edu



*"To laugh often and much.
To win respect of intelligent people
and the affection of children.
To leave the world a better place.
To know even one life has breathed easier,
because you have lived.
This is to have succeeded."*

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Is there an upside to being a Motherless Daughter? Yes! Motherless women tend to be non-traditional, original thinkers, purpose-driven, compassionate, sensitive, intuitive and creative. Just some of the famous women who grew up without mothers: The Sisters Bronte, Marie Curie, Eleanor Roosevelt, Virginia Woolf, Marilyn Monroe, Princess Diana, Maya Angelou, Carol Burnett, Jane Fonda, Liza Minnelli, Madonna, Rosie O'Donnell and Oprah Winfrey.

*Women have strengths that amaze men. They bear hardships and they carry burdens,
but they hold happiness, love and joy. They smile when they want to scream.*

They sing when they want to cry.

They cry when they are happy and laugh when they are nervous.

They fight for what they believe in. They stand up to injustice.

*They don't take 'no' for an answer
when they believe there is a better solution.*

They go without, so their family can have.

They go to the doctor with a frightened friend.

They love unconditionally.

*They cry when their children excel
and cheer when their friends get awards.*

They are happy when they hear about a birth or a wedding.

Their hearts break when a friend dies.

*They grieve at the loss of a family member,
yet they are strong when they think there is no strength left.*

They know that a hug and a kiss can heal a broken heart.

Women come in all shapes, sizes and colors.

They'll drive, fly, walk, run or e-mail you to show how much they care about you.

The heart of a woman is what makes the world keep turning.

They bring joy, hope and love. They have compassion and ideas.

They give moral support to their family and friends.

Women have vital things to say and everything to give.

***HOWEVER, IF THERE IS ONE FLAW IN WOMEN,
IT IS THAT THEY FORGET THEIR WORTH.***

*Please remind all your women friends and relatives
just how truly amazing they are!*

Courage is not freedom from fear, but being afraid and going on. — J.C. Shapley

Profiles in Courage ~ by Diana Lyons, Daughter of Betty

Thank you, Mom~

It seemed just like any other Monday morning when I was getting ready for work. I had just started a new job and moved out on my own only four months before. I lived about an hour away from my parents. To me, that seemed so far away for a small town girl that was really close to Mom and Dad. Although excited to be on my own, I still talked to my Mom several times a day. I had even talked to her the previous night at about 9:30 pm. She was watching an awards show on TV and was laughing and seemed fine as always.

When I received a call from my Dad the next morning, all I remember

*I remember thinking,
what will happen to Dad
and us now...*

was that he told me something had happened to Mom and I needed to get my sister and come down to Colorado Springs to see him right away. Both my sister and I lived in Denver. I didn't know at the time that my Mom had already passed away. She had suffered a massive heart attack in her sleep. I was told they tried to revive her eight times but her heart couldn't take it. I had just turned 21 thirteen days before. I never would have believed that my 21st birthday would have been the last time I saw my Mom alive.

I remember the drive to the hospital being the longest hour of my life. I will never forget seeing my Dad as we pulled up to the hospital, standing against the wall with a man dressed all in white and next to him was a wheelchair. This was apparently for me in the anticipation that I was going to lose it. They were right. That moment I knew she had died. My world suddenly stopped and was forever changed at that moment.

All I remember is I wanted to run through the hospital to try to find her and sobbing uncontrollably. I remember seeing Mom in a room lying on a table. It was so unreal. I kept thinking how could this be happening? I just talked to her last night. The next

thing I remember was my Aunt and cousins coming to the hospital and then just feeling numb. I remember my Dad's eyes looking so scared and sad. They had been married for 35 years. I remember thinking, what will happen to Dad and us now, Mom took care of everything and everyone.

We buried Mom back in our hometown where we grew up in Southern Illinois. That's what Mom wanted. My Mom was always concerned about taking care of everyone. My Dad had been in ailing health for several years and she had always been concerned that something was going to happen to him or that something would happen to both of them and leave my sister and I alone. I know

now that this was probably her battling her own issues of being a Motherless Daughter in addition to being Fatherless as well. Her fear was for us to end up like her, growing up without parents.

Mom took care of us even in the end. She had written a letter to my sister and I outlining the details of what we would need to do in the event something happened to her and my Dad. It was all there. The funeral home information, the songs she wanted sang and who to call, the minister and all the other details that go along with planning such a dreaded event. Mom was a member of the Order of the Eastern Star. I remember this being a wonderful part of her life and service. She enjoyed this so much. They made her memorial really special. Her service was full of friends, just like her life.

I recently came to an incredible realization. I have obviously been aware that my Mom was also a Motherless Daughter but I never really thought about how similar we were in our situations about mother loss. It is so familiar that it is often scary. She lost her Mom at the age of 25. It was always hard for me as a child growing up not knowing any grandparents. I

missed having grandparents at all the special occasions and events. My Mom often talked about her parents and tried to keep their memory alive to us. I remember her being sad about her Mom not being there to see my sister and I grow up. She used to talk about her Mom a lot and I remember her crying as she would look at pictures. The realization is that I now find myself saying and doing the very same thing with my children, especially my daughter Taylor. I talk often about my parents and tell stories about my childhood to try to give them that connection to my parents. Of course, as a Motherless Daughter we worry about the unknown. I often find myself worrying if I might repeat history, dying and leaving Taylor while she is young. It scares me so much to think about this, often to the point of tears.

My daughter recently has begun telling stories about my Mom. She will often say that she went to Grandma Betty's house or that Grandma bought her a pretty dress that she is wearing that day. She talks about her as if she is still very much alive. I laugh with her and sometimes cry when I hear these stories as they sound so true and real to her. They are so familiar to me as I remember making up stories about the grandma I always wished I had. I even adopted a couple of ladies throughout my life and called them Grandma just to replace the void I felt.

I have met many other Motherless Daughters throughout the years and I am different than some I know. I was fortunate to have my Mom for 20 years. I was also blessed to have a very close relationship with her during those years, which included happy childhood memories to look back on, and a Mom that was very involved in my life. I remember lots of parties, Mom being a room parent and involved at every school event and her being the Mom that all my friends wanted to be around. I still can remember the smell of her homemade pot roast on the stove and brownies in the oven when I walked in the door from school.

"Everyone's journey is unique. Live yours true to you."

The memories I have are of the warmth of home and of all the traditions Mom created with our family. Holidays were a very special time for us. My Mom always over did it with Christmas presents, often to the point of embarrassment when friends would come over. We were a middle class family, but Mom made sure we never wanted for anything.

I was really sick as a child and was somewhat protected by my parents, especially my Mom. She loved being a Mom. She wanted so much to have children. My parents were married for 13 years before they had my sister. My Mom suffered eight miscarriages. They were on a waiting list to adopt and before the adoption was final they found out she was expecting again. My Mom said she knew this would be the one. My sister was born nine months later. I came along two years and ten months after. Mom always said we were her miracle babies. I think this caused my Mom to hold on tight to her relationships to her family, especially her daughters. I loved spending time with Mom and didn't go through the normal "rebellion" of the early teens like many girls. I was barely 21 when Mom passed away, but in many ways, I was emotionally much younger. I have realized that I have grieved her death much more like a younger daughter would have because I grew up so dependent on her and close to her. Because of this, I do feel a close connection to other Motherless Daughters who have lost their mothers at a young age.

I know that what has happened to me in my life has greatly impacted the choices I have made and the direction of my life. My life took a very different path after Mom passed away. I truly believe that if Mom were alive today I would be living close to her and would have been married at a young age with children early in life. That's the life I knew. I would not have pursued the fast track career path that I have experienced since her death. After Mom's death I went through a stage of denial that took me

through some challenging times. I came through those times and soon began my journey on a fast track to a career that would eventually change my life. I became obsessed with becoming successful and making it in this world. I thought the busier I became, the less time I had to think about the things that I was missing in my life. I had moved to California with a friend for a job and she left soon after we moved. I was determined to stay. I was on my own and it was so scary, but I was determined to make it. I worked with a company for over 10 years, starting at the bottom and had worked my way all the way to the top. One day I looked around and realized I had sacrificed all the things that I loved so much because I was hiding in work and trying to forget the pain of being alone. It had to stop and it did.

Prayers really do get answered. I remember praying so hard one Sunday night 10 years ago, that my life would change and that I could get out of this empty hole I was in. I knew the job I had for so long and had been committed to for so long was destroying my life and was slowly taking my health with it. I sat by my bed and cried and prayed. I woke up the next morning with a feeling that everything was going to be fine. That was the day I left my job and 5 days later I met my husband. Now I am so blessed to have a wonderful husband Chris, and a beautiful son Jake and daughter Taylor. I count my blessings every day that God answered my prayers and let this dream come true for me. I treasure my family and I love creating the memories and traditions that were started by my Mom with my own family. I miss her so much everyday and wish she could be here to see my children grow up and tell me everything will be okay. I do know she is watching from heaven with my Dad and I hope she is proud of her little girl. I know there is so much of her in me and I am so thankful for that. Thank you Mom, for giving me memories to keep in my heart and pass on to my family! I love you and miss you so much!

Love Always,

Diana Lyons
Daughter of Betty

"Losing your Mother so young,
makes you feel sort of invisible."

~
*Dylan McDermott, Actor,
"Big Shots, The Practice"*



Motherless Daughters Media Recommendations

"No Reservations" now available on DVD, starring Catherine Zeta-Jones, Aaron Eckhart and Abigail Breslin (Little Miss Sunshine) Catherine Zeta-Jones plays a single career woman who "inherits" her nine-year old niece, Zoe, after the little girl's mother dies in a traffic accident. Zeta-Jones makes all kinds of mistakes as she struggles to connect with the little girl, played by Abigail Breslin, a bright, perceptive child who is clearly out of place in Zeta-Jones routine, but Zeta-Jones is determined to make a home for Zoe just as soon as she figures out how. Thumbs up!

And coming soon to DVD, another good movie portraying a motherless daughter. "Alice, upside down" was presented at the 2008 Newport Beach Film Festival and was attended by a few of our MD's. An upbeat movie of an awkward pre-teen growing up without her mother. Good portrayal of the motherless experience and we enjoyed speaking with young "Alice" and the film's director, Mr. Sandy Tung, immediately following the movie. This film starred Alyson Stoner, Lucas Grabeel, Luke Perry (of 90210 fame) and Penny Marshall. Another thumbs up!

Hello Ladies ~ as I step down from the MDOC Newsletter, I'd like to share, that I have thoroughly enjoyed my involvement and handling of the "desktop publishing" of our newsletter for going on five years now. It has been a true blessing getting to know all the MDOC ladies personally, while volunteering. Thank you for the opportunity, the experience, the healing, but especially for the support and friendships I have gained! I proudly must pass on the torch to the next set of volunteers who will contribute their new ideas and grow from their involvement with such a wonderful project and group!

~ Laura Gibson

In keeping with the newsletter theme, "to all the important females in my life... and you know just who you are...thank you very much for your support and presence in my life, it truly means the world to me!" Love, Laura

Board of Directors

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Sisters at Heart Newsletter

Laura Gibson, Editor
coopur@aol.com

The following websites provide information and support for Motherless Daughters:

www.motherlessdaughtersoforangecounty.org

www.motherlessmothers.org
www.hopeedelman.com
(Hope Edelman)

www.motherlessdaughtersbiz.com
(Irene Rubaum-Keller)

<http://www.tapestriesofhope.org>

The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of Motherless Daughters of Orange County

Members' Corner

IN LOVE AND REMEMBRANCE

We acknowledge each Sister at Heart as she remembers the anniversary month she lost her mom.



BIRTHDAY WISHES

"Today is the day that your Mother welcomed you into the world!"
Happy Birthday to all our SISTERS at HEART!

Our apologies for not listing each Sister's special date personally this quarter. There was simply not enough space to include all of us this time around!!!



Pictures from our time together at the 2007 Race for the Cure



A WARM WELCOME TO OUR LATEST MDOC MEMBERS!

Amalia Wasserman Judith Conklin
Liz Costello Orchid Johnson

THANK YOU!

To the following members for their generous donations!

Jill Singer Karen Stoller Casey Enda

In the event any specifics of Members Corner has your personal information incorrect or missing, please notify Laura Gibson at your earliest opportunity. Thank you.

Motherless Daughters of Orange County Membership Form

Please print and complete all items

Today's Date: _____

- \$25.00 Annual Membership (See member benefits below)
- \$20.00 Annual Non-Membership (Subscription to newsletter only)
- \$15.00 Student Rate: Eighteen (18) years of age and younger
- Other: \$_____ MDOC appreciates any other tax-deductible donation you care to make and will provide you with a letter for tax purposes.

- I have enclosed my company's matching gift form. Please contact me regarding volunteer opportunities.

Membership donations pay for the printing of *Sisters at Heart* Newsletter, mailings, local organizer support, and administrative costs. This information is strictly for the purpose of maintaining our database. Motherless Daughters of Orange County does not sell or exchange its member information with any person or organization.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: () _____ E-Mail: _____

Occupation: _____ Your Date of Birth: / /

Mother's Name: _____ Mother's age at time of loss: _____

Do you have children? Yes No Month/Day you lost your mom: _____

If so, how many? Boys: _____ Girls: _____ Your age at time of loss: _____

How did you hear about Motherless Daughters of Orange County (MDOC)? _____

Please make your check or money order payable to: Motherless Daughters of Orange County or MDOC

Mail to: Juanita Driskell, 1302 W. Colonial Avenue, Anaheim, CA 92802

MEMBER BENEFITS

Your annual membership to Motherless Daughters of Orange County will provide you with the following benefits for one year:

- A subscription to our newsletter *Sisters at Heart*, published quarterly and full of information about new research, programs, workshops, therapy groups, and media events relating to mother loss; books and film reviews; member contributions including poetry, anecdotes, and personal experiences; Q&As with experts in the field; profiles of motherless women; and news from bereavement centers and camps that help children cope with loss.
- Invitations to special events and social events for motherless women.
- Notices about local workshops and seminars that relate to early mother loss and/or grieving.
- Details about signing up with on-line services that offer Motherless Daughters message boards and forums for discussion.
- Discounts to members for all MDOC-sponsored events that include the public.

Motherless Daughters of Orange County was formed to provide support, community and resources to women and girls who have experienced early mother loss (birth to 21 years of age). We are committed to bringing together motherless daughters, otherwise isolated, to encourage healing among them and to promote awareness about the long-lasting effects of such a loss.

Motherless Daughters of Orange County, Inc.
Mission Statement



Motherless Daughters
of Orange County

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