coffin be put when it comes?' they asked us. We explained the lay-out in the chapel and the teachers felt that it might be inappropriate for them to go to the graveside. The clergyman said that for the church's part there was no reason why they should not. After the service in the chapel the family prepared to drive up the hillside to the site prepared for the burial and we decided to walk rather than drive in the school mini-bus.

The boys stood together to watch the vehicles leave. The mother of the dead boy, who was so sedated that when she tried to walk she had to be half carried, was sitting in the back of one of the cars. At this moment she caught sight of the boys and recognised one in particular as being her son's friend. It was like the sun breaking through the clouds, though it was still raining, when she stopped weeping, smiled, waved, and blew him a kiss.

We walked up the hillside and the teachers were diffident about being too close but the clergyman beckoned us to stand around the grave with the family. When the service was over the boys looked down into the hole in the ground at the coffin, reflecting on every detail. As we drove back to school they asked me if I would see and talk with someone who had had a fight with the boy shortly before he had been electrocuted. 'He feels very bad about it,' they said. *We had looked after their feelings and they were looking after someone else's in turn.*

The teachers were not sure why some of the boys had wanted to go to the funeral, those who had not been particular friends with the boy. I knew that one at least was mourning a little bit more for a mother who had died. We agreed that all had behaved with great dignity and sensitivity. What we were all sure about was the psychological value of the shared emotional experience in the mud and the rain and that we would not forget the comfort which the sight of the boys had brought to the mother. 'What hospital is she in?' one asked me. 'I would go to see her'.

These were all 'difficult' boys, but they had shown themselves to have a sense of responsibility and reciprocity. Bearing in mind that some behaviour problems in older children are linked with inhibition of grief, I hope that we have to some extent helped them to express and share grief.

This article was first published in THERAPEUTIC EDUCATION, Volume 6, No. 2 and is reprinted with permission.

REFERENCES

BLACK, D. (1974). What happens to bereaved children? *Therapeutic Education*, Spring 1974.

COWMEADOW, P., ELLIOTT, F. (1975). Sexuality and violence as defences against the pain of death and rejection. *Therapeutic Education*, 3, 1.

Teachers have an important role to play in helping their pupils to cope with the death of one of their mates. The late Patricia Goldacre in this issue recounts some of her work with deprived boys which enabled them to take part in the funeral of their friend. Readers might also like to refer to Arngrimsson's account, "A community crisis resolved by a mourning ritual" (Bereavement Care, 1984 3:2) which describes the creation of a ritual for school children deprived of one of their friends by his accidental death. Although death in childhood is rare, children at special schools for the physically handicapped are more likely to face death—their own or their friends'. Teaching children about loss and bereavement should be a part of the curriculum and a pack for teachers will shortly be available.

How can children learn to cope with the facts of death? The first funeral a child attends should not be that of a parent or sibling, and so there is a duty on the part of children's caretakers (parents, teachers, etc.) to help them to learn in a less painful setting. For many children the care of pets may bring home the reality that "All who live must die" (Shakespeare: Hamlet). Sateki Faletau's little poem (p. 21) shows us that the lesson has been learned in a healthy way. Lucie-Smith's lesson from his father's death (p. 22) is a subtle and less healthy one—the use of grief to bind the bully's fist may lead to the misuse of grief later on. Poems and pictures (see cover) can help children to understand, anticipate and cope with the painful feelings in themselves and others aroused by death.

Doctors and nurses too can help or hinder the processes of grief and mourning in patients and their families. Those working with children have to face the possibility that their efforts to cure may not succeed. In this issue we publish an account by Dr. David Morris, an eminent paediatrician, of his pioneering clinic where he counsels families who had lost a baby in the neo-natal period. One of the problems for children in coping with death is their very familiarity with it in forms which become meaningless by repetition and distance. I refer to televised death and violence—both fact and fiction. Two recently published papers and correspondence in the British Medical Journal* continue the debate about the effect of "soap" suicide attempts on the suicide rate in the population (see Bereavement Care 1986, 5:3). For children who cannot easily distinguish fantasy from reality, the continued exposure to TV death may lead to a blunting of emotional sensitivity. Do we do enough to protect children from such dangers?

EDITOR

Ellis, S. J., Walsh, S. (1986) Soap may seriously damage your health. Lancet; i : 686.

Platt, S. (1987) The aftermath of Angie's overdose: is soap (opera) damaging to your health? BMJ; 294: 954-957.

Ellis, S. J., Walsh, S. (1987) Angie's overdose. BMJ; 294:1415.

BEING BEREAVED

by Michael Stewart, Social Worker.

Whenever I notice a sudden death in the press these days, my mind begins to wonder how many will be bothered when I die. Selfish thought? Maybe. But still, I can't help wondering. My father died in 1975. Nearly 11 years ago now. There were several hundred at his funeral. Yes, several hundred, all of them in some way bereaved of my father. I remember feeling a sense of pride and excitement. I also recall an unwelcomed feeling of resentment. After all, he was **my** father! I was more important than them. He was only their friend, or neighbour, or colleague, I was the 'real' bereaved. I was a close relative, his oldest son.

I couldn't cry at the funeral. I had to be strong and look after my mother. Some of the other mourners did cry. Men my father had worked in the same office with. Friends he had been close to. Mates. Men in their fifties. Men I had never clapped eyes on in the entire time I had been my father's son. Afterwards, as is the custom, everyone stood around and talked. I listened in. I learned a lot about my father that day. From total strangers.

By the time the sun went down on us, a crowd of mourners, I had had an object lesson on one very important item of life's experiences. My father did not belong exclusively to me Nor to my brothers and sisters. Nor to his brothers and sisters. Not even to his heartbroken wife. My father had many friends. He belonged to them, too.

The reflection on his personal experience of bereavement was written for 'City Link', the newsletter for those affected by the Bradford City fire, and is reprinted here with permission.