

Facing Life After Loss

Life after the loss of a loved one is never easy. Every day brings new challenges, and grief triggers seem to lurk behind every corner in the days, months and years following the loss of a close relative or friend. Pat Grant of Yankton is no stranger to these feelings. She lost her husband, Jack Kastengren, in April of 2010 to colon cancer, and only eight months later she had a new reason to grieve when her 33-year-old daughter, Misti Andrzejek, died from complications of Huntington's disease.

Over the last year, Pat, along with her 11-year-old granddaughter, M'aleigh Andrzejek, have struggled to overcome their grief and rebuild their lives.

"I keep my grief to myself a lot," Pat said. "There are tears when I'm alone. The memories hit me before I go to bed. Usually they are good memories, but there are still tears."

Losing Jack was hard on the family, but at the time, Pat said she was focused on caring for Misti and M'aleigh and didn't have a lot of time to grieve properly. When Misti died later that year, the effect of losing them both hit her at the same time.

"I slowly started putting away their things. It was really hard to give their stuff away or pack it away and realize that everyone had just gone and it was just the two of us alone," Pat said.

"Jack and I were together for 15 years and married for a year and a half. When he found out he was sick, he was very worried about making sure M'aleigh, Misti and I would be taken care of. We got married at the courthouse Oct. 31, 2008. I wore a sweat suit and he wore his work clothes. Misti and M'aleigh were there in Halloween costumes. It was a fun day," she continued. "It's hard to not have Jack around. We were together for 15 years and he was a carpenter. When things break, I always think 'Why didn't he tell me how to fix this?'"

Pat said she found it hard to stay home after Jack's and Misti's deaths.

"There were just so many memories in the house," she said. "It was hard for M'aleigh, too, because when she would get home from school or wake up in the morning, she always expected to see her mom. When we would leave the house, I would panic for a minute that I had left Misti. She went everywhere with me, so it was hard to get over that feeling that I had left her behind."

Pat said M'aleigh had dreams of her Grandpa Jack and a few of her mom, and they concerned her a bit, so she sought counseling for M'aleigh to help her deal with her grief.

"It was explained to us that we are all made up of energy; and Jack and Misti are still around us in energy form," Pat said. "For me, that was a very positive realization. It comforts me to think they are still with us. It's good for M'aleigh to know that her mom and grandpa are always with her."

M'aleigh's counselors also suggested she start an extracurricular activity, and they gave her a list of activities available in the area.



Pat Grant and her granddaughter, M'aleigh Andrzejek share a moment outside the National Field Archery Association while M'aleigh takes a break from archery practice.



Women's *Waterproof & Stylish* Boots

• Easy On/Off • Lightweight
Available in great colors too!



Berries by oetrex

Boston Shoes to Boots

312 W. 3rd, Yankton • 665-9092