

Losing a child - an unbearable pain

It is probably true to say no-one can ever fully realise the pain a parent suffers on the loss of a child unless you experience it yourself.

Alexandra Browne-Hill has indeed experienced that overwhelming grief and found that writing a journal throughout the intensity of the grieving period helped her considerably and she has put her written words into a very eloquent and moving book, now on sale at Collins Booksellers.

Alexandra Brown-Hill quotes in her book, "One cannot have life without death. Some scars will never heal, losing a child

in this life is the ultimate pain."

Alexandra's journey during the realisation that her 17-year-old son Kieran was unlikely to survive a car crash, through the agonies of his funeral and then coping with the knowledge her beloved son was no longer with her, is beautifully written and it is probably also true to say that any person who reads this story without shedding a tear or two has no appreciation of the sorrow for the loss of a loved one.

Alex has also found comfort from the "messages" she constantly receives from Kieran, the

incidences, or rather coincidences of happenings along with a message almost too numerous to be doubted.

In a rather unnerving glimpse into the future, Kieran once informed his mother he would not live beyond 17 years of age, also telling his sisters he would die young. Alex determined never to dwell on this and when that dreadful phone call came on that never to be forgotten night telling of her son's car accident, she still pushed Kieran's premonition to one side.

It was Easter Monday 2007 when Kieran took his final breath. After four days in a coma with

his family by his side, Alex eventually accepted her son would probably not survive, bidding him farewell.

The family apportioned no blame to the young driver of the car, a close mate of Kieran's, though he was driving too fast for the conditions on the dirt roads, Kieran foolishly sitting in the back of the ute, with no hope of escaping injury when the ute rolled.

The diary Alex has written is addressed to Kieran, often a chatty collection of family happenings as well as a pouring out of her love for him and the pain she is experiencing.

Alex is no stranger to death, her years as a nurse has seen it all and while she was slowly, ever so slowly, coming to terms with her son's passing, the family were dealt yet another blow when Alex's husband was involved in a serious accident and is still recovering, plus the devastating news her sister, a Bairnsdale resident, had aggressive breast cancer.

Alex's acceptance of spiritualism has been a gradual embracement, she is not fanatical about it but her beliefs have helped her through this very stressful time, the death of her sister last

year further plunging the family into sorrow.

But on meeting Alex you realise that not only has she a big heart, but she is also grounded on the practicalities of learning to deal with grief and through her own experiences, is able to help others.

She does not profess to be a medium or such, though she does occasionally consult one. In the depths of her despair she was ready to grasp at any help that was offered and found the "messages" Kieran sent, not only through a medium but directly to her, were, and are, of immeasurable comfort.

She strongly believes Kieran is watching over her and able to console her on her "bad" days.

Alex has become very involved with the local cancer support group who helped her sister during her fight with the disease. She travels to Bairnsdale regularly to help and comfort her two teenage nephews and is actively participating in the group's fundraising efforts.

"I love coming down here, in fact I'm thinking it would be a good place to retire. The people here are so friendly and welcoming, I now know why Mandy (Alex's sister)



Alexandra Browne-Hill holding a copy of her book 'The Flowering Gum'. K111-121

chose to live here," Alex said.

The book is titled *The Flowering Gum*, a tribute to a tree the family planted the day Kieran would have turned 18. If read-

ing the book only comforts one person while they are in mourning then Alex will be happy and she's sure Kieran would endorse her words.