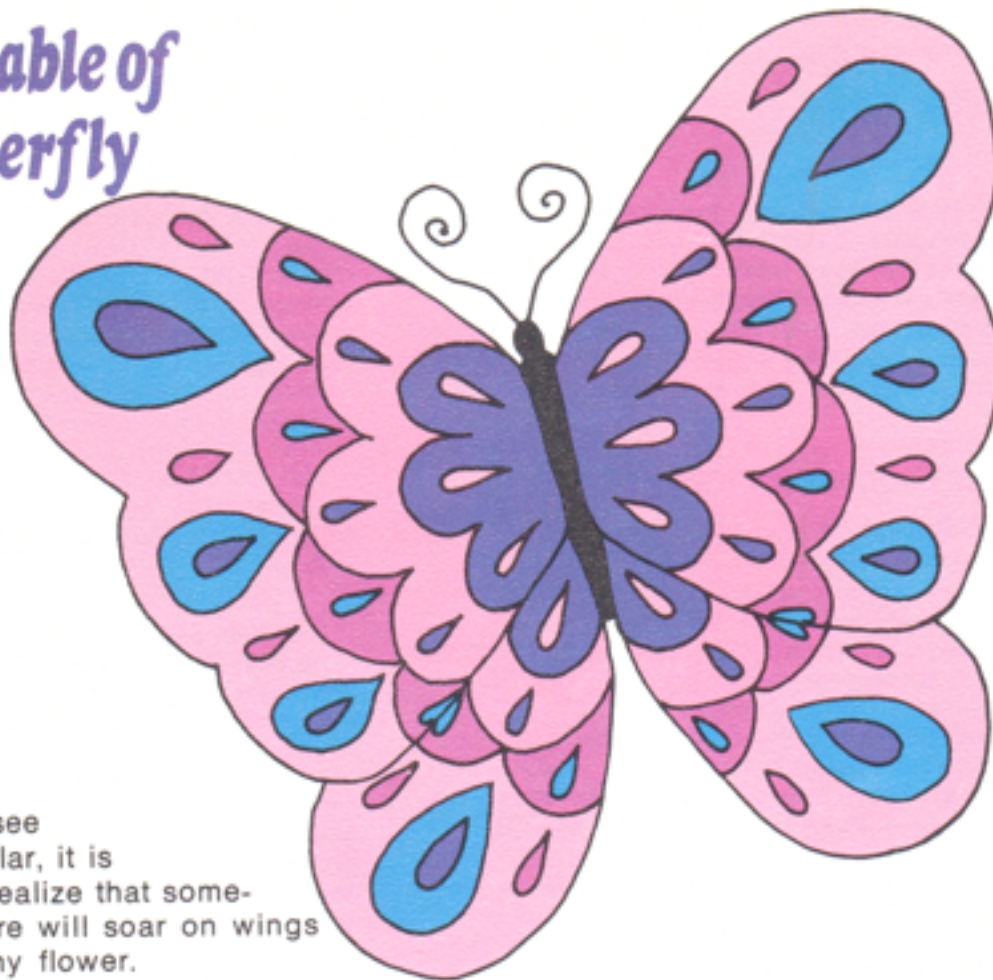


The Parable of the Butterfly



Whenever we see a fuzzy caterpillar, it is hard for us to realize that someday this creature will soar on wings as bright as any flower.

Before this great change comes about, the fuzzy little caterpillar withdraws from its world and finds itself a place alone. There, painfully and with much struggling, it wraps itself tightly into a cocoon of its own making. It literally seals itself off from the world. Days pass and then, very gradually, a crevice appears in the hard outer layer of its private little world. Finally, a new creature emerges, quite a different creature too! It sits for awhile, clinging to its familiar surroundings, waiting for the warmth of the sunshine to dry its wings. And after awhile, it begins to flutter from flower to flower. Each time it lights on one, it strengthens itself with what each one has to offer, and at the same time, it leaves the pollen that it has gathered up from every other flower it has visited, thus enabling the flowers to make seeds and be born again.

We in TOPS have much in common with the butterfly. Time was when we, in spirit, crawled instead of soared. And, as our overweight progressed and our ability to cope with it wore thinner and thinner, we too withdrew from our world and built for ourselves a cocoon in which to hide.

Time passed, and finally somehow we heard of TOPS — and a tiny crack appeared in our private little cage. Hope appeared after a few meetings, and the hard shell cracked, and we came into the light and sat absorbing the warmth of fellowship and understanding from the group.

Then we began to carry to others what we had found in TOPS. And as we go to others, we are encouraged by them, and in turn, we leave with each one some of whatever all the others have given to us.

Area captain Bessie Long, TOPS #SC 14, Greenville