

LAMENTATIONS

Issue 22

S.U.C.C.E.S.S

July, 1994



July was a month our son, Jim, really enjoyed. One of his favorite activities was to set off firecrackers. No matter where we were, on July 4 we celebrated this day of independence. Even in the last year of his life (he was 18) he still enjoyed the excitement and fun of making a loud noise and seeing the beautiful colors explode in the night.

Since his death, I view this experience differently. I now relate this activity as a public display of my own grief. In a very real and descriptive way, these explosions are my grief. The firecracker has a very pretty package which doesn't give the observer any clue as to what is contained within. My grief is also encased in a "package" that does not reveal what grief "explosions" are within. And, when I least expect it, my grief is "lighted" by something as simple and unassuming as seeing someone with a color of shirt Young Jim liked, a catchy phrase he used ("It's Generic"), or a simple postcard of places we visited as a family.

These explosions of grief are the colors of 4th of July. **White** is a color which reflects light without absorbing it. This was my grief in the beginning. I was in shock and denial. I wanted to believe that it was just a bad dream from which I would soon awaken. Not so!!!

Red is the most consuming of the colors of grief. **Red** is the longest light wave in the color spectrum. This color of grief seems to last forever. My grief was so intense and heart breaking that I felt as if I were truly "bleeding" from the intensity of the grief. There were times that I thought I would never laugh or enjoy life again. But I have found that, with time and practice, I have refracted or broken open that red light of grief, and have let it "soar" to whatever heights or depths it needs to help me heal. I can now laugh and enjoy life.



Yes, it is a life without our son, but my husband and I busy ourselves in finding ways to be sure Young Jim will not be forgotten.

Blue is a color which describes our emotions of sadness and gloom. But I challenge you to light that firecracker of grief, to permit yourself to "explode" with the many colors of grief and soar into a new world of acceptance.

What are your colors of grief?

July is also a month for vacations. What are your plans this summer? Often times, vacations are very painful, just as holidays. A vacation is a time to recreate and to re-create. There are times when our grief becomes so intense, that we have to recreate--we have to escape and refresh ourselves with new strength to

continue our grief work at a later date. In an article in the newsletter, *The HOPE Line*, the editor recommended vacationing near water: *Watching water and hearing it lap against the shore is soothing As the waves recede, try to envision your grief receding; as the waves return, think of them bringing peace and comfort.* Reading is of comfort to me. If you would like any suggestions for books that are helping me journey through my own grief, let me know. Take off to new heights!



We also need to re-create, to start anew. As hard as this is to accept, and as hard as it is to let go with our grief, we need to find meaning in life. We can do this by taking time to grieve, but to also reflect on what we can do with the remainder of our lives that will be beneficial to all. I truly believe that we are helped by helping others. In John Bramblett's book *When Good-bye Is, Forever: Learning To Live Again After The Loss Of A Child*, he states: *The most important thing to remember is that, regardless of the form it takes, the effort of reaching out speeds the healing process for both those who give and those who receive.*

I challenge you to reach out to others. I have enclosed the names and addresses of those of us who have lost children. I challenge you to contact at least one family. We are a great bunch!!!

Grief Grafts

July 26 is/was Young Jim's birthday. I never know how to say it. Do we use the word "is" or "was"? Jim lives in my heart and soul as "is," but when telling something about what he said or did, I use "was." Which do you think is correct?

Anyway, Young Jim was born July 26, 1972, on my sister's birthday. (Her eldest son was born on my birthday). We have always had great fun telling about the best birthday presents we ever received.

My Mother wrote the following poem to Young Jim on his 17th birthday:

To Jim II on his Birthday

From a "Birthday Baby"

Who pinches on his cake.

To a birthday youth.

Who just can't wait

To get his driver's licenses

And be his own man'

From a kindergarten child.

small and shy.

To a high school scholar.

who now wears a tie!

A lot of education going on!

From a grandparent's sweetheart.

Who loved their world.

To a good looking fellow.

Who is interested in the girls-

A lot of growing up he's done!

From a little fellow.

Fitting lids on pans.

To an ardent inventor

And a fine young man-

That's our Jim!

A Christian who attends

His church each week

Who watches carefully

The company he keeps

And desires the good life-

We're very proud of him!

Now on this birthday.

We're wondering how it will be.

Twenty years from now-

We'd love to be around and see

This business man family man.

Lovable JIM'

Grandmother

Both my parents have died since Young Jim's death, so they are now together.

Alesha, the 13-year-old daughter of Roger and Patty Hunter, died in an automobile accident 8-19-93. Alesha's kindergarten teacher wrote the following letter to Alesha on the day of her death:

Dear. Dear Alesha.

Last night or should I say way before the break of dawn. I lay in my bed not yet asleep and watched you. You were walking down a very long, narrow hallway at least I thought it was a hallway. You were walking toward a light. It was a dim light but bright. The hallway seemed to be dark, but I could see you perfectly. I followed you begging you silently but loudly to come back. You kept on going and pretended you did not hear me, but I knew you could hear me. I kept on following pleading and begging you to "come back Alesha," I even used your grandmother's pet name for you calling "Lesh, what about your poor mother." I said "she will blame herself" You kept on walking. I yelled at God to intervene to send you back. "Oh God please send her back. Alesha, "I kept screaming over and over. You finally turned to face me. Even though I could not clearly see your face. I did see you shake your head. You did not speak. You just casually and defiantly shook your head. "No."

You then turned and walked on toward the light. A light that was brighter than any light I've ever seen but a light that did not hurt a person's eyes to look at. The hallway you walked down turned a corner and you turned with it. You disappeared from

my line of vision when you turned the corner. I hurriedly followed to catch sight of you again.

As I turned the corner. I saw you beginning to ascend in a shaft or tunnel of light. The shaft of light was like those I've seen from the sun through a cloud but more brilliant and more beautiful but yet still did not hurt my eyes. The shaft of light seemed to be miles and miles high.

I stood and watched and still begged to you to come back. I kept watching you as you ascended and I thought of Jesus ascending into Heaven and this is the way I saw him ascend.

Even though I did not feel myself move. I followed you up the shaft of light. I knew you were at peace. I knew you were happy. I knew also that I could not stop you from going. I kept watching you, as you floated upward. "I will miss you." I thought "and so will your family and friends." I then saw you take on the most beautiful pair of white wings anyone could ever dream of owning. I don't remember touching them but I knew they were so downy soft with layer after layer of feathers that felt like a baby chick's feathers but they were bigger.

You were oh so happy. I cried for your happiness and then I cried for my loneliness. I cried again for your family especially your mother. You did not speak but I could feel you tell me to tell your mom "not to blame herself, it was my time to go. Jesus was calling. "

I was so captivated by the wings you adorned and stood there watching you in your glory. I don't know if you kept on going or if I was returning, but I could not see your face or your body anymore just a pair of beautiful, oh so beautiful wings. I could have touched them so close were they.

I turned to God and begged him to "please be with her family during their grief" I also knew that at the time that I had to return because God did not want me now. He had allowed me to see this much

and I knew I was privileged to be able to see what I had seen. I said, "Thank you dear God and he with this family especially her mother."

I turned my head toward my husband patted his arm and went to sleep and waited for your aunt Cindy to call me. You see, Alesha, I had called her earlier to ask what happened and she has promised to call me back She doesn't have to call for I already know from the vision I honestly tried to ward off to start with. I will wait for her to call anyway to confirm my vision.

I will miss you as long as I live.

Love,

Your Kindergarten Teacher

Alesha's symbol is a heart.



Bill and Beverly Donan's 16-year-old son, John, was killed in an automobile accident, 10-2-93. The family wrote:

John played hard and for his young life he had done more than most adults in a lifetime. He had traveled extensively with his family; he rode horses; he camped and toured all over the USA and abroad with Boy Scouts. He was an Eagle Scout and a member of the Order of the Arrow; he hunted and fished; he had a fulltime summer job in construction; and he could talk with adults as easily as young children. John loved to read animal stories, war stories, science fiction, and especially Louis L'Amour cowboy tales. He and his father traded Louie's back and forth. He loved to repair things around the house and enjoyed woodworking; he also played on the golf team in high school.

John was a thinker, quiet, friendly, and sensitive, yet intense at times. His friends talked and laughed about his unique sense of humor. John had a keen intelligence and had dreams of becoming a mechanical or electrical engineer.

We had erected a beautiful hand crafted cross made of Hawaiian Koa wood in our church sanctuary First Presbyterian

Church, Madisonville, KY, to celebrate John's life. The area Scout Camp is building a shelter from donations and will name it for him in his memory.

John was a special son and brother who we loved dearly. We can only hope that his new journey in life is even more exciting and fun.



John's symbol is a hawk. Its clear call and soaring nature symbolizes John's free spirit.

Geri Fitzgerald's 37-year-old daughter, Linda, died 7-24-91. Linda's symbol is an angel. Geri sent this poem by James Freeman:



THE TRAVELER

He has put on an invisibility.

Dear Lord. I cannot see.

But this I know, although the road ascends
And passes from my sight,

That there will be no night;

That YOU will take him gently by the hand
And lead him on.

Along the road of life that never ends,

And he will find it is not death but dawn

I do not doubt that YOU are there as here,

And you will hold him dear.

Our life did not begin with birth.

It is not of this earth

And this that we call death, it is no more
Than the opening and closing of a door.

And in YOUR house how many rooms must
be

Beyond this one where we rest momentarily
Dear lord, I thank YOU for the faith that
frees.

The love that knows it cannot lose its own

The love that, looking through the shadows,
sees

That YOU and he and I are ever one!

On 2-9-93, Terry and Kelly Alexander lost their 4-month-old son,



Cole, to AIDS. Cole's symbol is an angel. Terry wrote: I was thinking the other day about how 'dark' my world was when we lost Cole.

And now, with the people I have met along my 'journey,' there is a 'light' coming back into my life. I will never 'get over' losing Cole - I guess I'm just learning to live with it.

Quentin, the 13-year-old son of Hubert and Pam Meade, died from Synovial Cell Carcinoma, 8-8-93. Quentin's symbols are praying hands and legos. Pam wrote the following poem:



SANDS OF TIME

Quentin, who was born in January '80

Was our first born son

Then along came Joshua

In the year of '81.

Having two beautiful sons

Oh! My heart was proud

So much to be thankful for

When my head in prayer was bowed.

Having more children

This I could not do

So very thankful to God

For blessing me with you two.

Watching you both grow

From day to day

Quentin was the more timid one

This I noticed along the way.

Thru each day Quentin

Growing much more strong

When the first day of school came

He didn't want me along.

Two short years later

Josh would start to school

I dreaded this for Josh

But I dreaded it for me, too.

Worrying about Quentin going

Was something I did do

I knew Josh could make it

Thinking him the stronger of the two.

Going to school
They both did so well
Oh! So very proud
How my heart did swell.

I see the sands of time
Counting away the day
I watch my children grow
As they run and play.

It seemed only yesterday
The two of them were so small
Now a short time later
They both stand so tall.

We lived on Toler in a place
We called "bottom" for a time
Then we moved on the "hill"
In the Fall of '89.

In July of 1990
Our world came to a halt
Don't let it be something serious
Please be something simple. I thought.

Oh! How my heart ached
For our oldest son Quentin
Was diagnosed with cancer
In the same year. August 28.

I wanted to run, wanting to hide
But for Dad, Josh and Quentin. I had to be
strong
Not knowing for how long
I would have Quentin at my side.

It was so very hard
Leaving Dad and Josh along the way
For Quentin would have to start chemo
In Lexington at UK.

Keeping our family together
Only God knows how hard I tried
For He was always with me
Right there by my side.

I watched so many families
Being split right in two
For tragedy had hit them
Like it had me and you Dad too.

One of Quentin's biggest fears
Was that I would leave him too
It's not only physical pain in which you
dwell

But in emotional as well.

Quentin and I traveled back and forth
To UK for over three years
I had to be very strong
Fighting hard, choking back the tears.

We grew close to so many
Going thru the same thing
It brought so many of us together
Closer to each other did we cling.

I can 't count all who this life have past
In our struggling the three years last
Praying with all my heart to remain strong
Knowing I wouldn't have
Quentin for very long.

So many surgeries
Quentin had to go thru
I wondered, while my heart ached
"How much more could Quentin's body
take."

Waiting for recovery praying to God
Please guide the doctor's hand
Asking all the while
How much more could Quentin stand.

Leaving Dad and Josh behind
Was so hard to do
But spending time with Quentin
Was something I had to do.

He wanted Dad and Josh to be there
Josh had to go to school
He needed Dad for his care.
Dad needed to work too
Trying to keep things as normal as possible
Was what we had to do.

In the year of '92 somewhat late
Thoughts of something to celebrate
But the tumor had come back,
Oh! so many tears
After the battle of two long years.

More tests had to be done
OH! How hard for news to wait
When we talked with doctors
They would have to amputate.

The doctors came to talk with us
They had words of cheer
For when surgery was done

The margins were all clear.

Then in the month of February
After an evaluation of tests
My heart was filled with fear
The enemy had returned in Quentin's chest.

"God give me the strength"
I prayed for each day.
Leaving Dad and Josh behind once more
For at UK again we'd have to stay.

When starting a new round of chemo. I said
"Quentin, there's something I must know"
Oh! How hard to ask, what strife
"Are you tired of fighting for your life?"
It was with such cheer
Quentin told me what I wanted to hear.
With his big bright eyes, beautiful smile
He looked at me for a while.
Quentin was so brave, such a fighter
His strength he wanted me to see.

The doctors came in with good news
After new chemo one round
How my heart leaped with joy
In leaps and bounds
How wonderful to know to "think"
That the Tumors had started to shrink.

Thru all this Josh
Grew to be such a "little" man
Having to go thru so much
To deal with and understand.

In early June of '93
Quentin went to Indian summer camp
How I wanted him with me
Only one week he was to stay
How I missed him while he was away.

Later in June of '93
Quentin and I went back to UK
For another round of chemo
We would have to stay.

The doctors needed to talk with me
This the fear I had known
That Quentin had gotten worse
The tumors had grown and grown.

Standing there talking with the doctors
Having to be so strong
Listening to them tell me

Something I feared for so very long.
I went looking for someone, anyone
I guess I just needed to talk
For Quentin had gone over
To Judi's to talk.

Big Steph came over
How she knew this, I could not see
Later I learned Aunt Nell called her
To come and be with me.

The doctor wanted to talk
With Quentin and me
But I told them not until
I could be with some of the family.

Aunts Sharon, Catherine and Uncle Doyle
Came down to UK
For we were going home
We were not going to stay.

Oh! How hard
Such a task
When with questions
Quentin began to ask.

When Quentin was diagnosed
I promised nothing from him I would hide
Truthfully answering his questions
Oh! How hard I tried.

Telling Quentin the chemo wasn't working
To him I did not lie
Telling him the doctors said "if"
They could only try.

Going back home, how hard to wait
What anticipation
The doctors had called
They would try experimentation.

At the Children's Hospital in Cincinnati
A week we would have to stay
For this was not done
At the hospital in Lexington, at UK

I wanted Josh with me
How I needed him too
But he had to stay with Mamaw
For he was still in school.

We went back to UK
Another CT Scan Quentin needed to take
When the doctor called with news

Oh! How my heart ached.

The new medication called Taxotere
This Quentin did take
The news the doctor gave me
No improvement did it make.

Telling Quentin, Oh! How hard to do
But this from him I could not hide
Having to tell him the truth
For to him I never lied
How hard to tell him
Another medicine they would try to find.

For another phone call
We would have to wait
Knowing in my heart
It was already too late.

For under Quentin's collar bone
I could watch it grow
Another tumor was surfacing
This much did I know.

Another week at Children's we needed to
go
On August 2nd we were on our way
Josh I needed you so
But with Granny Jo and Scotty you went to
stay.

This was so very hard
Something no one wants to hear
The doctors telling you death
Of your child is very near.
Just Dad and I at Cincinnati
We didn't want to stay
It seemed we were all alone
We needed to be home at UK.

On the 7th of August of '93
Familiar faces we were happy to see
So thankful Joshua had come
Down with some of the family.
Dad and Josh went to a motel to spend the
night
Dad did not want to go this way
But Aunt Sharon told him
With Quentin and me she would stay.

Quentin was so very strong
How hard he did fight
I asked how much longer,
Dear God But he made it through the night.

How my heart hurt at the thought losing
you
But going thru more suffering
Mommy didn't want you to do.
Knowing "then" nothing could do you no
harm
Oh! How precious my son, when I held you
in my arms.
Oh! How hard Quentin fought
How hard his body did shake
But when we told him not to be afraid God
was waiting for him
Only three more breaths did Quentin take.
How my heart hurt
Before his last breath he did release
How my heart settled
It seemed to be at peace.

Knowing how Quentin had suffered
Seeing he'd been thru enough
Only those who have lost in the same
Know it can be very tough.

Going back home without Quentin
Was not easy to do
But I have Dad
And Josh I have too.

Having Quentin no longer beside me
How hard to make it thru the day
I know God is there with me
For strength and courage I need along the
way.

We had our problems
Over the past three years
Not only dealing with sickness
It brought many tears.

Not all this time was bad
Of course some happy, some sad
I have to remember all the good times
With Quentin I had.

We'll be spending Christmas this year
Without Quentin, my precious dear
Knowing he's with God, no longer suffering
Is what I think of to bring me cheer.



Roger Herndon's
symbol is a monarch
butterfly, He was killed
in a plane crash

8-2-91. Roger's parents, Woody and Donna Herndon have designed and had a bumper sticker made which says "I brake for butterflies." It has a butterfly on it and is a very good quality bumper sticker which will not fade in the weather.

Donna wrote the following poem to go with the bumper sticker:

The Metamorphosis

...dedicated to Roger....

The lowly caterpillar

creeping, seeking
limited of sight and mind
bound to earth

In time

heeds the call
unheard by others
turning toward the Creator.

Inside the shroud

of the chrysalis
God's miracle unfolds...
The Metamorphosis.

Emerges now a butterfly

frail tent folded
winging skyward
shimmering, soaring

Transformed.

And so our children too

are free,
free of this world's bonds
and cares.

Sweet winged creatures

precious presence
borne heavenward
in hands of love

Glorifying God

Touching hearts with hope
Beautiful symbols of His
promise
Fulfilled.

Donna wrote on the bottom of the poem:

Butterflies are symbols of the Compassionate Friends organization and have special

significance for many parents who have suffered the loss of children. The bumper sticker "I Brake for Butterflies" can serve as an identifying link for those of us who share this bond. Any contribution to offset the cost of the bumper stickers should be mailed to the Roger Herndon Memorial Fund. c.o Calloway County Schools. P.D. Box 800. Murray. KY 42071. This fund allows needy children to participate in school and school activities that would otherwise not be possible. The fund has been used to meet needs as diverse as shoes and underwear, field trip costs, academic team competition costs, fees for summer sports leagues, and housing costs for a girl who could not have graduated without this help.

The Herndon's address is:

1515 Oxford Drive
Murray, KY 42071
502- 753- 7784

Frank and Sharon Smith are having a stone carved in memory of their daughter, Frannie, who was killed in a skiing accident, 2-7-93. Frannie's birth and death dates will be inscribed, with the following quote:



A SPIRIT SET FREE

Pray for me my fellow man on the day of my death

Pray for the world I am entering that you may enter too.

Let your mind be at ease, for I love you, And I know you love me.

Don't worry about good-byes. for I am still with you.

I am watching you and guiding you just as before.

Only now you don't see me. Let it be remembered. . .

Now I am free. . . A spirit gliding in beauty.

Every rime you see God's beauty. you see me.

I am with you. . . Travel with me.

Frannie's symbol is an angel.

I have enclosed a list of the many parents' names, addresses, telephone numbers, child's name, their symbol, and cause of death. I hope you will get in touch with each other. You will be blessed, as I am blessed, by getting to know each other. We have a wonderful network if you will use it. Be sure to let me know if I have incorrect information.

Margaret Spiess wrote a book of prayers entitled, *Cries From the Heart-Prayers for Bereaved Parents*. The prayer, *Let Go* is taken from Isaiah 35:10.

There's nothing I can do to bring him back but by keeping my stubborn grip on grief I may be preventing his progress in his new home.

Help me let go. Lord and obtain the joy and gladness promised in your Word.

I don't have room to include the solution to last month's crossword puzzle. Let me know if you want it published next month.

Carole Kemper brought this cartoon to the picnic. I wonder why she thought of me? Thanks, Carole, for reminding me of the great healing power of chocolate!



"I love him! He's a doctor who says that there's nothing that can't be cured by a little chocolate."