

LAMENTATIONS

Issue 26

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

November, 1994



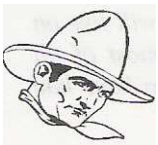
Many famous people were born in November. Daniel Boone, a famous American frontiersman, was born, November 2, 1734. He was an explorer who blazed trails for future settlers. He was not afraid to go into unknown territory and would become so familiar with that territory that it became friendly and comfortable to him.

We can become "trail-blazers" with our own grief. As we "blaze" that uncharted trail, we find that it soon becomes familiar enough that we can return to it and go even deeper into that wilderness of grief until it becomes comfortable and even friendly to us. As a result, we can also lead others to "explore" their own trail of grief. That is not to say that we should become so comfortable with our grief that we want to "settle" or remain there. I believe it is just the opposite, it becomes so comfortable that it makes us want to continue blazing that trail until we come to a "clearing" where there is light and life.

Let us join the "wagon train" to explore this wilderness of grief. As a group, it is less frightening, and together we will become a neighborhood of fellow travelers.



Will Rogers, an American humorist and social critic, was born November 4, 1879. His love of roping has endeared him to me. He began most of his lectures and newspaper columns by saying, "All I know is what I read in the papers." I believe that is one of the things that helps me the most with my



own grief--reading as much as I can about grief so that I can understand my own feelings. With each book, I become more familiar with "how" I feel and "why" I feel as I do. All my feelings, including anger and guilt, are normal. I encourage each of you to read, and if you would like the names of the many books that have meant so much to me, just let me know. There are so many good ones; but let me caution you, there are some that seem to harm more than they help.

Will Rogers also said, "I never met a man I didn't like." I would like to corrupt that statement by saying, "I never met a grieving parent I didn't love." It seems that because of our commonality, we become a group that is close, if not closer than any biological family. There is a bond that can never be broken. I thank you for being my family.

In Meg Woodson's book, *Making It Through The Toughest Days of Grief*, she explains that we grieverers are angry people. We are angry at injustice, at our loved one's death, at our emotional pain, and at death's unlimited power over us all.

Neil Clark Warren said, "If you pretend you have no anger and try to bury it, it can bury you. . . If you let it out in the wrong way, it can ruin your marriage, alienate your children, or get you fired. . . If you somehow turn it around on yourself, it can tear your self-image apart." We must deal with our anger so we can learn to eventually release it. This may be in the form of crying, screaming, beating a pillow, or talking to an empty chair as if you are talking with your *anger face to face*.

Thanksgiving is a difficult time for each of us because, how can we observe a day of "thanksgiving" when we

aren't thankful? How can we be, when our loved one is gone? Meg Woodson stated my feelings exactly: *How we grieverers long, on these special days, to have our loved ones acknowledged. Their absence; their presence. To have others listen as we share our memories of them. To listen as others share their memories. That sad-glad sharing, too, is thanksgiving.*

We grieverers long for understanding of our suffering and grief. It is true that "*Bad Things Happen to Good People*," and we will never have the answer to "Why?" Ms. Woodson suggests that we ask "How?" How can we use this bad thing for the good of ourselves and others? Each of us can give purpose to our pain and grief. Giving purpose helps ease our pain. She made a profound statement: *To take it, to face it, to work through it, and eventually to convert it.*

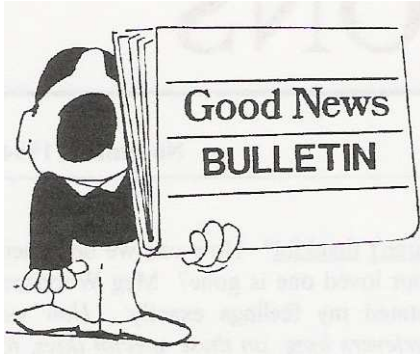
Wolterstorff: in his book, *Lament for a Son*, said: *The worst days are holidays. Days meant as festivals of happiness and joy now are days of tears. The gap is too great between day and heart. Days of routine I can manage; no songs are expected. But how am I to sing in this desolate land, when there's always one too few?*

I encourage you to find something for which to be thankful this holiday.

A cornucopia is a horn-shaped container represented in art as overflowing with fruit, vegetables, and flowers; a horn of plenty. It is the symbol of fruitfulness and plenty. Perhaps you can have one on your table and fill it with "things" for which you are thankful.



Grief Grafts



Congratulations to Luther and Rosemary Smith! We not only recognize their importance to us, but their home town of Beattyville has selected them to be **Co-Citizens of the Year** at the annual **Woolly Worm Festival**. We are so proud of the *two* of you! Two of their sons, Drew and Jeremiah, were killed in an auto accident, 7-23-92. Their symbol is a yellow butterfly. Their son, Jordan, is a joy to each of us that knows him.

Donna Herndon wrote the following:

"How are you?"
 "Better" I say. .
 Better at hiding my
 path
 Better at pretending our lives have re-
 turned to normal,
 Better at shedding my tears when only
 God can see.



Grief crystals sharp and hard
 Pain made manifest
 Cutting, hurting.

Only tears dissolve that cutting edge,
 Refining the crystal through which
 life is viewed so differently.



You asked me how I'm doing
 You want to see me smile.
 You want to think the grief that came
 only lingered for a while.

And so I play the game with you.
 I smile and say, "Just fine."
 But those who've trod this road before
 know the pain that still is mine.



How could this happen?
 How can this be?
 How could my son be taken from me?
 When will the hot tears that was o'er
 my soul yield to sweet memories?
 Will I ever be whole?



This poetry was written after the death of Donna and Woody's son, Roger, on 8-2-91. Roger's symbol is a monarch butterfly.

Tony and Sherrill Elam's 18-year-old daughter, Suzanne Joy, was killed in an automobile accident, 6-3-94 She was an Honor Student at U.K., a member of the All Academic Team, National Merit Scholar at UK., Honors Program at UK., National Honor Society, the Beta Club, Franklin County Academic Team, and Governor's Scholar. She grew and sold vegetables at Frankfort Saturday

Farmers Market and was a volunteer of both the Frankfort Soup Kitchen and the American Red Cross. Sherrill shared: *Suzanne was a great joy to all who knew her. Not only was she gifted with a great intellect, but at a young age had a wisdom and understanding of the true values of life. In our pain, we have been wrapped up in arms of love by so many people who share our grief* Suzanne's symbol is a lily.



John, the 28-year-old son of Art and Eleanor Foss, died of bladder cancer, 10-5-93 John was truly a modern-day **Job**. Eleanor chronologized John's life, saying: *Tragically, life was not as kind to John, as he was to everyone. John was sweet, kind and gentle. He was deeply compassionate. He loved to ski, hunt, fish, boat, travel and be in the sun.*

Age 19- Running an errand for us, he was hit by a drunk driver, in a coma for a month and re-hab for a year. He battled furiously, made an unprecedented recovery and returned to college.

Age 21- Picking up a date at 9:00 PM, hit head on by another drunk driver - no physical injuries, but the car was totaled

Age 22- Working in the summer at a local race track, valet parking, both his feet were run over and crushed by a pick-up truck.

Age 23- During the summer, working on a boat, when it was hit by another boat - no physical injury

Age 24- A glorious, triumphant college graduation. John tenaciously applied to and was accepted into Law School in San Francisco. He began Law School in September--in October, the earthquake hit that city.

Age 25- John was diagnosed with bladder cancer. The youngest patient ever. the survival rate is 78%. Bladder cancer hits after age 25 and is only 2% of all malignancies.

John had multiple surgeries all over the country. One was 13 1/2 hours in duration. He had many chemo and radiation sessions. He fought his battle with courage, strength, grace and concern for his family. He rode the incredible cancer roller coaster with a smile and positive attitude.

He worried about everyone else and proclaimed his love and gratitude until his final breath at home in our arms.

We had searched, re-searched, flown all over, prayed endlessly--to no avail.

*To us John was life and love. He leased, he laughed, he cajoled, he wheeled, he dealt, he smiled, **HE LIVED.***

He so enjoyed his life and we so enjoyed our son. He had such grandiose hopes and dreams for his future. They were just not meant to be.

What seems to have been meant to be, was how John's courage and spirit left such an indelible impression on every person whose life he touched, and with his charm and outgoing manner he touched so very many. He will live on in so many lives forever, most of all ours. We are so grateful to have had him for 28 years.



John's symbols are an angel, yellow roses and a red BMW



Judy Bowmar's 15-year-old daughter, Jessica, was killed by a truck, 10-19-93. Jessica's friend, Melanie Lucas, visited with Judy 10 months after Jessica's death, and Judy described it as a "very happy/ sad/ scary/ heart-breaking time" Melanie was also hit by the truck. During the Easter season, Melanie made a cross out of 2 x 4's, painted it white, placed red, pink and white roses in the center of the cross, and painted Jessica's name, birth and death dates on it and placed it on the side of the street where the truck had struck them.

After the accident, Melanie wrote this poem:

YOU

We were on a running through field, of flowers, jumping, dancing, spinning basking in the morning's glory and the earth's, splendor, blinded by the sunlight.

And now it seems that our paths were only meant to cross for the short but sweet, wonderful moments that it did.

So now I sit here thinking quietly-- Now drowned by the darkness of only you.

Dedicated to Jessica Dawn Stevens, My best friend always and forever.



Jessica's symbol is a rose.

Mary, the 8-year-old daughter of Karen Lacy, died from an auto accident, 9-25-91. Karen explains the anniversary of Mary's death as "life." She said,

"I like to think of it as life, because being in Heaven with God; now that's living! Every year seems to be better and easier. As I look back a year ago to see how far I've come on working on my S.U.C.C.E.S.S, I'm still growing and learning, so I guess that's a good sign."

Karen is now volunteering at the Christian school where Mary attended. Karen's dearest friend, who was Mary's

first grade teacher, asked Karen if she would be interested in helping her once a week, since she had been her aide for three years prior to Mary's death. Karen visits Mary's classmates often and receives welcome hugs from Mary's many friends, Karen explains that "*time and hugs help my grief progress as well as having the precious gift of friend, like fellow travelers.*"

Karen's symbols are hearts and a rainbow.



Ed and Pat Kuzela's 20-year-old son, Chris, died as the result of a fall on 4-24-88. As a result of Chris' death, the Kuzelas are now leaders for *Compassionate Friends* in Tucker, Georgia. Pat made a beautiful stained glass window for Chris which is a seagull with a beautiful rainbow behind it.



The Kuzelas have also planted a yellow rose and this was written on his birthdate:

*There is this yellow rose
That grows in Chris' garden
And it only seems to bloom on
Mother's Day and on His Mother's
birthday
As a special sign of love to her. . .*

*What a difference this "presence"
makes in trying to celebrate those
days with out him.*

This poem was written after Chris' death:

PACKING UP THE PRAYERS

They told us we shouldn't go to bring your things home from the dorm.

They didn't know that those things included the supplies bought especially for college. . .

Like the sheets and pillow cases, mini refrigerator, iron and ironing board, back pack, storage shelves all-weather jacket. . .

Were little prayers for your future, your college years, the future beyond college

these things represented our small sacrifices of love.

Instead the sacrifice was yours

So, of course we should go to absorb the memory of your room as you left it before the game,

To fold up our prayers and, staggering with the weight of them, carrying them home to where the dreams first began.

Jill, the 17-year-old daughter of Oscar and Leola Cole, was killed in an automobile accident, 5-24-92. Leola is very involved in community activities, including being a school board member. She is also taking two college courses *Death and Dying* and *Social Interaction*. She is involved in waste disposal and a project entitled **Project Move**. She feels that it not only keeps her busy, but she is doing this because Jill was so concerned with these problems too, Jill's symbol is a sunshine.



James, the 17-year-old son of Raymond and Birdellia Patrick, was killed in an auto accident 4-16-93. They have a "new" grandson who has been named in memory of James. His name is Timothy George Donavon Reynolds. James' middle name is Donavon. Congratulations! James' symbols are a clown and a heart.

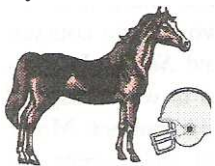


Lee and Regina Cox's 17-year-old son, Jamie, committed suicide on May 23, 1994. Jamie was described as a young man who enjoyed farm work and worked for everyone around in the area with tobacco and hay. He was the type of child that always had a smile on his face and would stop to help a stranger if he saw them in need. The family has had strangers tell them how special Jamie was to them. Everyone who knew him loved him. He was active in JROTC and had just made major in the Ranger Division. He had been in many competitions, in and out of the state of Kentucky, and had attended Camp at Fort Knox for 2 years. Even though

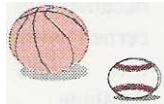
Jamie had a job after school and on the weekends, which often prohibited him from getting home until 2-3 AM, he always got up and went to church on Sunday morning He was a good Christian boy and loved to hear the word of God spoken or sung.

After his death, many friends and relatives asked what they could do to help besides prayers and the family asked that they start a JROTC Scholarship at Southwestern Pulaski High School in Jamie's memory.

The family has selected several symbols. Of course, my favorite is the horse, but they have also selected a football helmet, and ball caps of the Red Skins and the 49ers.



Scottie, the 8-year -old Sites, was killed by an auto, 11-17-93. His symbols are a baseball and basketball



Esther Mertz's son, Dick, died 8-1 1 -93. She said that since Dick's Father's death, Dick had been her hope and strength. She misses him very much. Dick's symbol is music.



Karen Hall is a woman of great courage. She wrote, *I certainly do understand the heartaches and struggles you are going through for Young Jim, because I lost my only child, Olivia Nikole and my husband, Denzil Ray.*

As you know I was also involved in the accident. I spent several months in speech and physical therapy. I was required to take a year disability from work, to try and correct all my physical problems. Now that the new year is here, I have been able to return to teaching, with the help of a hearing aid. I want you to know, I praise God for my recovery. He is the best physician of all. You see, He could have wiped my memory and left me in a coma state. God does not cause horrible things to happen to people and we

must never blame Him for our losses. The good part is we will see them again someday if we live an obedient life.

Some days are harder to deal with than others and we will never be the same again. Birthdays, .special days, and holidays seem to be the most difficult days to live through as they approach. Loss is difficult! The scars Hoe have will never go away.

Olivia Nikole was 10 years old and her father, Denzil Ray, were killed in an automobile accident on 1-10--93. Nikole was a fifth grade student at the James A. Duff Elementary, (this school is named after her, grandfather), an honor student, a member of the Talented and Gifted Program in Floyd County, a Boy's Varsity cheerleader, and an avid piano player. Her father was a member of the bluegrass band Gum Branch Heartbreaker. Nikole enjoyed music and liked playing with her dad

The faculty and staff at Duff Elementary held several fund raisers to purchase a bronze plaque of Nikole's picture. Also, money was donated in memory of Denzil Ray and Nikole. The money was spent on purchasing a new sound system for their home church, Hueysville Church of Christ.

The symbols for Nikole and Denzil Ray are musical notes.



Kellie, the 16-year-old daughter of Dennis and Judy Carpenter, was killed in an auto accident, 8-14-92. Judy explained our grief: I just read a wonderful book someone sent me and one of the quotes from it says--"Courage is not having the strength to go on; it's going on when you don't have the strength." Isn't that true! We can't solve our grief: all we can do is learn to manage it. And some days we manage better than others.

Well said, Judy! Kellie's symbol is a butterfly.



If this is the first holiday you will observe since the death of your loved one, the day before is usually worse than the

day itself. Try not to plan too much to do or too little. There needs to be a balance in that day. Do what will help you and your family make it through the day, and they may include changing some of the traditions you had in the past. Don't let others plan it for you. You know what you need.

Ms. Woodson suggests six ways to help ease your pain during this Thanksgiving season:

1. *Plan ahead Build structure, and support into these days. It's being caught off guard that does you in.*
2. *Take care of yourself on these days. Rest, treat yourself.*
3. *Feel the grief triggered by these days. Feel a little of the grief away.*
4. *Let people hold you on these days.*
5. *Let God hold your heart in His hands on these days.*
6. *Remember-honor-hold-your love in special ways on these days.*



Jim and I wish you a day of Thanksgiving.

To quote Will Rogers once again: ***We are all here for a spell; get all the good laughs you can.***



So-o-o-o-o-o-o!

I leave you with this:
Without you as a friend, I'd be totally lost! . . . ***KINDA LIKE WHEN IT'S MIDNIGHT. AND I'M HAVING A CHOCOLATE FIT. AND THE STORE'S CLOSED. AND ALL THERE IS TO EAT IN THE HOUSE IS FRUIT!***

