

LAMENTATIONS

Issue 33

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

June 1995



June is a month of "endings" and "beginnings." The school year has ended for those who were attending school, teaching, or who have had children attending school.

It is also a month of "beginnings." It is the beginning of summer and interest in planning a vacation. A *vacation* is defined as: *a respite or a time of respite from something; a scheduled period during which activity is suspended; a time of rest and freedom from work or other duties.* Perhaps, as you plan your vacation, you can think about it being a period of time that you can free yourself from the "work" of grief.

A vacation does not have to be an elaborate trip far from home. It can be a quiet afternoon in your backyard or a day trip to a park. What is important is that you take the time to rest from this long *winter* of your grief. In Meg Woodson's book, **Making It Through The Toughest Days of Grief**, she quoted a parent who felt that vacations had played a

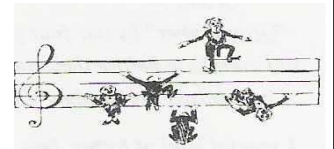
significant role in a transformation: *I tell you, my fellow-griever, all these years after my children's deaths, I still feel mortally wounded at times. I still feel sad. But I also feel strong. I feel peaceful. I feel hopeful. I feel loved. I feel alive in a way I never knew I could. I feel in a way I never did~~*



June 18 is Father's Day. K.F. Donnelly's book, **Recovering from the Loss of a Child (Words of Comfort and Hope from Parents Who have Survived Their Grief)**, has a chapter entitled *The Male Viewpoint*. The bereaved father is described as the one who: *suffers severely in the lonely pew of suppressed grief He endures not only the psychological impact of losing his child but the fear of losing his masculine identity by publicly displaying his distress. We are taught to expect a "real" man to be strong in time of crisis, strong in time of war, strong under fire. But what society does not fathom is that the loss of a child doesn't rank with other stress emotions. A man or a woman is entitled to the right of expiating sorrow.*

Men should be made aware that it is a natural response for them to experience the same emotional upheaval in grieving the death of a child that women do. In suffering a loss of such magnitude, it is also natural--and not unmasculine--for a man to find himself dealing with

periods of anger, guilt, moroseness, anxiety, frustration, and other real and gnawing thoughts. Many fathers refrain from acknowledging that they continue to experience this grief in the belief they have to mask their feeling, to hide them from view lest they be considered weak or unmanly. In so doing, they commit a great injustice to themselves. Like the octaves on a piano, a real man should be able to display



emotions in any range and grow from these expressions of emotions,

Fathers, when you are asked how many children you have, do you include the one that has died? Often, the father is less apt to tell others of their child's death, than the mother. Is this because the admission of their death conjures up too many emotions you cannot deal with when you are with others? When we are asked that question, Jim is quick to tell people that we had a son, Jim, for 18 years and it is okay to talk about him. This is of great comfort to both of us. We have acknowledged his existence and we show others that we like to talk about him.

If there is one gift I can give this Father's Day, it is the gift of expressing emotions.



Grief Grafts

The following poem was written
by my Mother to my Father:

Father's Day '83

*You wouldn't count it Father's Day
Without, at least, a word from me!
I rank him "most" of all the rest--
The father of our family!*

*First off, I'd like to have you know
A man he is of great renown:
A mayor once was needed sore--
They made him "Father of the Town!"*

*Four Times he's been announced as
"Grand"-
"Grandfather" by our four grandsons,
But even long before they came,
I recognized his "Father" fame!*

*A special kind of father, he--
The "Daddy-kind" that all kids need;
Our four will tell you right away
Their Daddy just cannot be beat!*

*I've had my say, the time has come
To give him love and gifts and cheer!
So, let the day get into swing ~
Announce him: "Father of the Year"!!*

*To Lee, from someone whose heart is
full of love for you - Margaret*

Margaret T. Lynch
5/31/12 - 9/4/93

Lee Lynch
10/2/07 - 12/14/92

My husband, Jim, wrote the following letter after Young Jim's death, 5-20-91:

As I write this letter, I'm reminded of St. Barton's Ode: "I am hurt but not slain. I will lie down and bleed awhile -- then I will rise and fight again." Since the death of our only child, Jim, my wife and I have been sustained by the thoughts and prayers, the warmth and sensitivity of people like you.

At a time like this the only thing I know to do is to keep extremely busy; it seems to help. During the past week as I talked with one gentleman he said: "I understand that Jim was your only child and that with his passing you will no longer have any children." I responded gently by saying: "No, that's not exactly true, for you see, Dinah and I are like Mr. Chips, we have thousands of children and they all happen to be located at Cumberland College." With the passing of our son, our only child, I suppose that is the way it will be for us. We shall never get over our loss, but time helps us deal constructively with the pain. After all, suffering develops character, and I'm told it even helps purify the soul.

As I have my catharsis which is, I believe, therapeutic, I can tell you that I've tried to pinch myself to wake up from this terrible nightmare. I, however, have come to the conclusion that this is no dream, and, therefore, we must make the best of it.

Permit me, then, to pass on just a few more thoughts and then we shall get on with the business called life.

Jim's death came as such a shock. It came so quickly, so unexpectedly in all of its finality. I always thought I'd go first, because I'm on the road almost constantly and am therefore the most vulnerable.

Yet, Dinah and I are not angry with God. While we are crushed, we are not mad because other people have children and we do not. We are not bitter because others are alive and our son is gone. We will not wallow in self pity nor will we allow ourselves to become bitter. We will not dwell on the "if onlys" or the "what might have beens." Instead, we are committed to make the best out of what otherwise could be exceedingly difficult situation. When we see friends, it is at times an awkward situation because no one knows what, if anything, should be said. Yet, we don't mind, for we realize this awkwardness is born out of concern of our friends. With Jim's passing, we will always feel the void. We will always love our son and cherish the moments and wonderful memories he brought to us

during the 18 years of his life. He was a pure joy, a dream child. He was so polite, courteous, and thoughtful. As one youngster said of Jim, "He was the nicest fellow you'd ever want to meet." We know he rests in the palm of God's hand.

Now, however, it is time to begin to look ahead and to set about with the objective of creating a memorial to a life well lived. That will be one of our major goals in life" to memorialize our son so others may benefit because Jim once adorned us with his presence. Who knows what good may come out of this? It could be Jim will be honored as much in death as in life.

I served as the speaker at our son's baccalaureate on the evening before his death, and I mentioned to the graduating class that problems will never leave you where they find you.. That once a problem comes your way, you'll never be the same. It's impossible because you'll either be bigger or bitter and a person's attitude will be the determining factor.

It is now our responsibility to turn tragedy into triumph and problem into possibilities. We will make the best of it. After all, the sun will still appear and the bird, will still sing after the storm, and it still takes darkness to see the evening stars.

The warmth of friends like you as well as our abiding faith has made all the difference thus far in our journey here below. Thank you so much for your warmth and sensitivity.



This letter goes to you from the two of us. Young Jim's symbols are a Pegasus, and angels/cherubs.

I have read many articles, poems, etc. which deal with a Father's grief, and I hope these will be of interest to you.

MEN DO CRY

I heard quite often "men don't cry" though no one ever told me why.

When I fell and skinned a knee,
He came by to comfort me.
When some bully-boy at school
and pull a prank so mean and cruel,
quickly learn to turn and quip,
doesn't hurt," and bite my lip.

As I grew to reasoned years,
Turned to stifle any tears.
ouh "Be a big boy" it began,
e soon I learned to "Be a man."

I could play that stoic role while
m and tempest wracked my soul.
pain or setback could there be
Id wrest one single tear from me.

On one long night I stood nearby
I helplessly watched my son die.
I quickly found, to my surprise,
That all that tearless talk was lies.

I still I cry, and have no shame.
Cannot play that "big boy" game.
And openly, without remorse,
Let my sorrow take its course.

those of you who can't abide
man you've seen who's often cried,
reach out to him with all your heart
one whose life's been torn apart.

For men DO cry when they can see
Their loss of immortality.
Sad tears will come in endless streams
Then mindless fate destroys their dreams.
-Ken Falk

A father's feelings are never told, for a
father's feelings are put on hold. For
the wants and the needs of the families are
first, so this father gives to them
first. A father's feelings run deep, for a
child that he lost, and he weeps. He
wants to hold her, and love her so
much, but the loss of that child is some-
times too much.

So a father just buries his feelings
down deep, and goes on in life, and
does not weep. "Dear Lord, help this
father make it through the night, and

take these feelings that are held on to so
tight" - Rick Cardinas 10/27/91

Jeff Dyson wrote an article to *The
Compassionate Friends Newsletter*
in the 1994 Spring edition. He ex-
plains his view:

*How do we fathers deal with the
death of a child? We've been good fa-
thers, doing our best to provide for our
families both materially and spiritually.
We have taken our responsibilities as
family men very seriously. He asked
the questions: Why do we have to suf-
fer? Why were we given this burden?
What wrong have we committed to de-
serve this pain? And most important,
how can we find the strength to en-
dure? Heck, we haven't even cheated
on our income taxes!*

*Hundreds of doubts assailed me as I
struggled to adjust to the reality of my
situation and to make some sense of
Blade's death. It was difficult for me to
accept that in a world governed by a
loving and all-powerful Creator, inno-
cent people suffer and die. Therefore, I
decided I must have been guilty of some
transgression. Worst of all, I
could not imagine ever feeling happy
again. I didn't think I would ever enjoy
my life. I missed my son terribly, and I
was consumed with worry about my
wife and surviving children. That ques-
tion of "Why?" continued to plague me.
I guess I was asking for knowledge and
insight which no mortal can have. It
was like a midnight search in a dark
room for a black cat that wasn't there.*

*We do not know the reason, but we
live in a world in which innocent peo-
ple suffer. We need not add guilt to the
pain we experience. Grief is a natural
and important part of the healing proc-
ess after the loss of a child. Guilt is
not. The kind of despair that often ac-
companies guilt must be dealt with and
overcome.*

*When we lose faith in the possibility
of ever regaining happiness, we don't
allow ourselves to believe that we can
hope again. In truth, believing that we
will get better is healing. We must reach
down inside ourselves and find*

*something to push us in a hopeful di-
rection. The first step is to make the
choice to believe we can overcome our
suffering. Despite the fact that we have
no guarantees for the future, we have
to accept hope. The alternative is to
allow ourselves to be convinced that
we will never be healed. How can we
progress from there? Hope can return
we allow it to. Doubt and despair we
impede the process. Only when we al-
low ourselves to take the leap of faith
and believe in the chance for our re-
newed happiness can we begin to
enjoy life once more.*

*So how do we begin our healing;
Well, like it or not, the only way out
through. How do you get started.
Start where you are. Start with your
grief, your despair, your guilt. Start
with your confusion and question.
Start with the fact that you ARE. Try
find some sense of gratitude about
your own life. Don't try to figure out
why...you never will.*

*This Father's Day, try to trust in
goodness of life and to want that good-
ness again. Dedicate your talents and
abilities to healing yourself and those
around you. You'll know you're getting
better when you can spend Father's
Day celebrating the joy of your child's
life, rather than the pain of his death.*

TO DAD

We wish you

H ope
A nswers
P eace

P ower
Y outh

F aith
A ctivity
T ears
H ealth
E mpathy
R ainbows
S miles

D reams
A mbition
Y earning



The children of *The Compassionate
Friends*, Niles, OH

Cecil James from Louisville, wrote this poem:

Today I heard the sound of a dove,
Emitting its mournful wail,
I heard the rustle of a breeze,
Caressing the flowers so frail

I heard the ripple of water,
As it flowed gently in a stream,
I heard a clap of thunder,
As in a far off dream.

I watched rain clouds forming,
Saw and heard the raindrops fall,
I heard the sound of an acorn
As it fell from the oak so tall

I watched a rainbow forming,
Beautiful colors in the sun,
Heard the chatter of two squirrels,
And saw a deer break to run.

I felt the chill of the raindrops,
And the cool breeze on my face,
I watched the many colored leaves
Fall and gently settle into place.

I smelled the fragrant aroma
Of a field of new mown hay.
All these, of my sense, I'd give
If once more I could hear her say
"Bye Dad."

Gary Piepenbring wrote this article for *The Compassionate Friends Newsletter* in the Spring of 1993.

THE OLD YELLOW TRUCK

Several weeks ago I sold my old, rusty yellow pickup truck. I placed an ad in the Baltimore Sunday paper which read: For Sale--1978 Toyota pickup truck. 119K miles--as is. \$450. Call. Someone called, paid me \$400, and drove away--all in the same day. I should have been happy to get rid of it; but instead, I ended up feeling depressed.

If I could have advertised the truck in our TCF Newsletter, the ad would have read:

For Sale (regretfully) 1978 Toyota pickup truck used by a college student when he was home for weekends or semester breaks. Provided safe transportation through a snowstorm on his last New Years Eve. Four-speaker stereo radio with rock music stations

preselected. Ashtray clean except for old bank receipts. Truck used by father for hauling things while thinking about son. Priceless. Don't call.

It has been 18 months since my son died, and yet it is still difficult to part with certain things--even things that did not belong to him. This is a problem with which we are all faced. What to keep? What to let go? The practical side of us says these things are no longer needed, so we should get rid of them. The heart says my son owned these things or used them: they bring back memories, so we should keep them.

There is not a right or wrong answer as to what we keep or what we let go. I reassure myself by noting that these memories of my son didn't leave with that old yellow truck. They will remain locked in my heart forever.

Curt and Debbi Dickinson have lost 3 babies which were miscarried in the 2nd trimester of pregnancy: Junior (12/24/80); Kimberly Melissa (8/25/87); and Angel Winter Dawn (12/25/89).

Debbi wrote this poem in memory of her father:

A LETTER TO DAD

Dear Dad,

Smiling through my tears
I remember the good times
we've shared throughout the
years...
funny moments together
as "the three Musketeers":

Telling you that the "D"
painting on our garage door
was for
"Dad";
Buying us shirts to match;
filling up your bathroom
with balloons
for no reason but to listen
to your colorful expressions
when you opened the door.
Going back to your room
you'd run into more!

It didn't get any better than
this --
dressing up at Halloween
as a pair of pumpkins,
our trip West and the
Florida vacations,
the Native American Pow

with the other vets,
going to the movies, Cubs
games, them
zoo,
reading the Sunday comics.

With me around, you always
wondered "What next?"
I have to admit, I wondered that
with you...
remembering the time we flew to
Boston
and you launched paper
airplanes at the "stews."

I remember the Senior trips --
to restaurants, shopping malls,
museums,
country fairs and more...
book sales, antique stores,
the Ghost Trip with Richard
Crowe, the Sr. Prom,
and Jenny Jones Show.
I'll never forget the look on your
face

when I took you to your first
tea party!
You were such a good sport and
took it with grace.
We laughed about it for days!

You smiled when Summer ate
your new Florsheim
shoes;
when the dogs woke up by
licking your toes
or grazing on your beard...

And the time when you tried so
hard to make a good
sandwich.
You put your bread on the
counter and made the
mistake of turning to
get something else.
Natasha stood up and
swallowed it in one
gulp.

It took you a couple of more
attempts
to figure out where the bread
went.

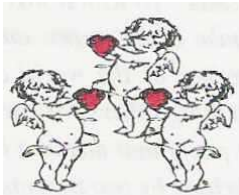
You didn't get mad when you
wanted to nap
and all 3 "grandpups" charged
past
and sprawled out on your bed
and you had to sleep somewhere
else
instead.

You're presence is all around me,
I'll think of you whenever I see
éclairs, Chinese food, apple
pie, oatmeal, fruit cake,
squirrels, geese, and the
number 13...

Purple was a joke with us –
 your favorite color – NOT!
 With love, we chose that color
 for flowers at your wake
 and lit purple candles,
 to celebrate your life...
 we still had memories to make!
 Thank you for always being there
 when I needed you,
 for the love that you gave,
 for all that you are
 and continue to be,
 for all that I am.
 Help me to believe
 that this darkness will fade
 and tomorrow will dawn.

Though you have gone to be with
 God,
 we can never really be apart.
 You are forever in our hearts,
 Your love is alive,
 Beyond our "good-byes"
 memories survive.

Angels and
 hearts symbol-
 ize their
 children.



Wendell and Pat Root's
 14-year-old daughter, Bessie, was
 killed in an auto accident, 10-29-94.
 Pat sent this loving poem:

A Tribute To Bessie

*You were only fourteen and my beautiful girl,
 With eyes that sparkled and teeth
 white as pearl.*

*You started out with dance lessons
 when you were only four
 Then came baton, gymnastics and
 more.*

*You were a cheerleader from fourth
 grade through eighth,
 And played softball, four years
 straight.*

*I'll never forget that first home run,
 I was so proud, we had so much fun.*

*You learned how to swim when you
 were only five.
 Thanks to the swimming lessons and
 now you wanted to learn to dive.*

*So we but it a pool at home,
 And it wasn't very long until you
 were diving and not doing it wrong.*

Wow
 where you danced in a circle

*Oh, yes, in between there was clog-
 ging lessons as well.*

I'll never forget the night that I fell.

*We were doing the Cotton Eye Joe
 When suddenly I tripped over my own
 toe.*

*We laughed so hard with all our
 might,
 But I bet I was a funny looking sight.*

*You were just beginning to double
 date a little when God called you home.*

*I wonder what you'll do up there with-
 out your telephone.*

*It rang constantly from three o'clock
 on . . .*

So many boys, some I'd never known.

*You were going to start this spring to
 modeling school,*

*It was the only thing you ever wanted
 to do.*

*They said you would make it. You
 wanted to try.*

*I said, "Go for it Bessie, " your limit's
 the sky.*

*She was so head strong this daughter
 of mine,*

*And I think on that night I didn't ever
 have a sign.*

*She went home with Lainie to spend
 the night.*

*I didn't know later on that evening she
 would take her final flight.*

*I never got to see my baby ever again.
 But I know she's in Heaven and it's
 just around the bend*

*I know in God's eyes it won't be very
 long. . .*

*Until I can hold my beautiful sweet
 daughter and we'll rejoice before God's
 throne.*

Bessie's sym-
 bols are balloons
 and hearts.



Eric Davis, the 15-year-old son of
 William and Anita Davis McCarty,
 died from a gunshot, 10-10-93.
 Anita is going through what so
 many of us are also experiencing.

"It follows me everywhere" you
 used
 to say,
 Yes, even to your last day.
 I wonder if you planned it that
 way.
 And on 7/24, the year '94
 on the hour you died (9.40)...
 and there's your 13.

She writes: *My sisters fuss at me
 because I won't clean Eric's room.
 I just can't because a part of Eric is
 still there.*

Anita requested that I include
 Eric's last name, Davis, in the news-
 letter because people who read it
 didn't know who he was. She
 continues: *no one remembers anymore
 anyway, and they get mad at me be-
 cause I do. I've lost all friends and
 family because I talk about him and go
 to the cemetery every chance I get.*

*I guess that's their problem, be-
 cause I can't (forget) and won't.*

The family has
 chosen the sun
 and water to
 symbolize Eric.



Don and Mary Jane Dietrichs'
 15-year-old son, Tom, died 4-2-94
 from accidental strangulation. Mary
 Jane shares: *Tom was my joy (Julie,
 our daughter, has been my sunshine).
 He was a delight most of the time, even
 though teenage rebellion was showing
 more often. He was always known for
 his great smile. Ever since he was a
 toddler he loved play and from a very
 young age, he seemed to be able to
 play with almost anyone of any age.*

*Tom was successful in school and
 was on the honor roll every quarter. He
 loved to read and could pour over
 baseball price guide books and would
 get quite excited about the great buys
 he had just made. He was especially
 talented in art and had truly realized
 that he could pursue some art or
 architecture in the beginning of 1994.
 Pi ano came easy for him even though
 he only took about 2 years, mostly
 under protest.*

*Tom had always been coordinated
 and had played Little League through-*

out grade school. He loved playing baseball but he was an average player and couldn't qualify (they took 15 out of 45) after 8th grade. In seventh

grade he went out for wrestling after being cut from basketball. He thought conditioning was great but really didn't like wrestling. He continued conditioning with weights and could bench press 165 lbs. He was in track (discus and shot-put) in 8th grade which he didn't really enjoy. He went out for football his Freshman year--really like it and continued with weights.

Tom had a wonderful personality and smiled most of the time. He like pumas, airplanes, jets, baseball, baseball cards, football, tennis, racquet ball, weights, Nintendo, pizza, vacations (especially the beach), doing well in school, dark rich colors (especially Tommy Hilfiger shirts), his friends and the prospect of driving soon. Tom and his sister, Julie, had really become friends and started doing things together.

In the last 2 months, it seemed we had some very important conversations together. In March I told him he was the kind of kid teachers like to have in their class because he was cooperative, agreeable, pleasant, organized and disciplined about his schoolwork (I'm a sub. in the schools). We had talked about his faith and his relationship with God and God's purpose for his life which I said God would direct him. I know he is with Jesus. (He had asked Jesus into his heart at age 5.)

Tom's symbol is a Puma.



Themba, the 19-year-old son of Vivian Williams, was murdered, 11-29-94. Through Vivian's own trials with the court system, she has founded a ministry. She writes: *Mothers of Murdered Offsprings did a candlelight service for Themba. I contacted other groups for information about the court system. I needed help right away. In my search I found these groups:*

Mothers of Murdered Offsprings
Stop The Killing
Citizens Against Violent Crime
Parents of Murdered Children
Fighting Back
Footprints

After finding out that they had no information about the court system themselves, when it came time for my son's murderer's bond hearing, I attended with a pen and a pad.

I felt God's calling in a ministry of going to the court system to help me and others. This is very new to me. I didn't choose this calling, but after my son's killing, my calling came through God. "And God, I thank you for the strength that you have placed on me, to endure to follow your calling through this tragic death of my loving son. Themba, this is for you and others that we can help."

After gathering this information about the court procedures, I was chosen to represent the other groups that I had joined. Some days coming home it's hard for me and I still question, "Why?"

Having renewed my faith in God through my son's death, my trials and tribulations, I feel connected with these families while sitting in the courtroom with othe

Vivian has a sticker which reads: "Purple is for non-violence." When you see purple, I hope you will remember our children that have been murdered. If you have any questions or want additional information, you may write:

Vivian Williams
 230 S. Cedar Street # 6
 P.O. Box 33366
 Charlotte, NC 28202

Themba's symbols are a sunshine and an angel.



Michael and Wanda Knight's 16-year-old son, Dustin, was killed in an automobile accident, 3-26-93. Wanda wrote: *I read your letters each month. It staggers my mind when I read about the children and their ages. It seems there are more young people leaving this world, than older ones. I miss my son, Dustin, so much.*

It helps to know there are others who know how you feel.

Some day God will sound the trumpet, and we will have a wonderful reunion with our loved ones.



Dustin's symbol is an angel.

Kim, the 27-year old daughter of Jerry Stricker and Nona Stricker, took her own life, 10-27-94. The family has published a beautiful booklet entitled, *A Celebration of the Life of Kim Stricker*, and under her picture it reads, *Kim, our Special Angel*. One page in the booklet reads: *To Kim it was very important to make a difference and make her little corner of the world a better place by helping others. We would like to share a poem that meant a lot to Kim. It was written by two parents of Kim's students at Arlitt Pre-School in Cincinnati where she completed her speech therapy practicum:*

The Land of Speech

Once upon a time, in the land of Speech

Some wonderful ladies decided to teach.

The children they taught, were so full of life

There was Shawna and Nicolas, George and Mike.

In the land of Speech, there was so much to do

There were songs to be sung and fun games too!

There were toys and pictures and stories to read,

A puppet show stage and nice things to eat.

But not only did the kids have fun,

They learned to say words like shoe and sun.

They learned to say words like chip and chew

And other good words, some old, some new.

The kids liked each other, so things went really well

They liked to be there, it was easy to tell.

So I'm glad that in the land of Speech

Those wonderful ladies decided to teach

*For Your Dedication,
With love, Connie Benton and
Shawna Mimes
July 28, 1993*



Kim's symbol is an angel.

Bill and Carole Kemper's 18-year-old son, Chris, was killed in a truck accident, 7 -21 -93. Carole wrote about the tragedy in Oklahoma City: *My heart went out to those parents in Oklahoma City. They do not realize that the hurt will always remain with them even though it will become less painful. I know there are still times when I mention Chris's name or remember a special memory and tears still flow and it will soon be two years.*

I wanted to share with you that the youth group of our church started a puppet and skit ministry. Several members of our church adopted puppets and paid for them to be made. We were allowed to name them. Naturally, I adopted one and named it "Chris." Josh, who was the boy driving the truck, is the president of the youth group. They have gone to several churches to present their program. I've seen the skits several times. My cousin told me that when they did it at her church, Josh gave his testimony in which he tells about the accident and all about Chris, his best friend.

*Josh had also suggested to the youth leaders that they name the group, **Friends of Chris or Chris's Friends.** (I'm not sure which) They have already done that and are planning a dedication for the program on Sunday night, May 7. They placed Chris's picture and poem on the trunk in which*

they store the puppets. They are making membership cards with Chris's picture on them. They want me to speak. I told them that I will try, but I know I'll get emotional. I hope I can say something that will help some young person.

Chris's symbols are a cowboy hat and boots.



Donna Carr's, 10-year-old son, Clyde died of Leukemia 6-27-93. Chavae, Clyde's sister wrote the following letter to Clyde:

Dear Clyde,

The first time I visited your gravesite, I was only a few months pregnant and the only thing that I could think about was that you were not here to share the happiness of my pregnancy with the rest of the family Even with all the excitement, all through my pregnancy, that sadness remained in me.

Now that my daughter is here, I don't think I've ever been happier, but I still hold that one piece of sadness in me because I know you'll never get to hold her in your arms or hear her call you "Uncle Clyde." I've decided not to make the same mistake with her that I made with you, though. I make sure I tell her everyday how much I love her so that she doesn't leave this earth "doubting" or "wondering" how I feel.

There is one thought that lifts my spirits, though And that is that I'm sure you've assigned yourself as her guardian angel (this has been reassured by a very special family friend!) I know you will watch over her and take care of her even when I am no longer able. Because I know you will do this, I dedicate the birth of Sierra Chavae Carr to you.

You are always in my heart and my dreams.

*Love,
Your big sister, Vae*

Clyde's symbol is a teddy bear.



Susan Dorsey, the 23-year-old daughter of Mark and Marie Spickard, was killed by an automobile while walking with her husband, Mike, 7-25-94. Susan and Mike had graduated from Cumberland College. Susan's symbol is a cameo.



Jim, the 30-year-old son of Springer and Anne Hoskins, was killed in a mountain climbing accident, 6-13-93. Springer lamented:

Father's Day

Sunday, June 18, 1995. Another Father's Day.

As the father of four adult children - two sons and two daughters -- I will be expecting their telephone calls to wish me a happy Father's Day. It's a tradition, those calls.

As certain as I am that the sun will rise tomorrow, that's how certain I am that those calls will come, even from the daughter in far off Guatemala.

Three calls, yes, but not the fourth It didn't come last year or the year before, and it won't come this year or the next. I won't pick up the phone for a fourth call and hear that familiar voice and those familiar words from years past: "Hello, Pop. Just wanted to wish you a happy Father's Day and tell you again that I love you."

Jim, the younger son, died two years ago on a Sunday afternoon in early June when he fell while descending from a peak in the Olympic Mountains of Washington state. His is the missing fourth call.

Did I love him more or less than his brother or sisters? Of course not. Yet, Jim is special now. Another father who lost one of five sons in a similar accident, tells why:

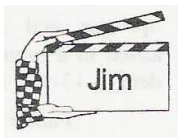
"Death has picked him out, not love. Death has made him special. He is special in my grieving. When I give thanks,

I mention all four; when I lament, I mention only him. Wounded love is special love, special in its wound. Now I think of him every day; before, I did not. Of the four, only he has a grave."

No, the fourth call won't come this Father's Day. But I still hear that special voice say in his own special way: "Hello, Pop. Just wanted to wish you a happy Father's Day and tell you that I love you."

I hear it every day.

Jim's symbol is a clapstick.



Doug and Vivian Batson's 20-year-old son, Brent, was killed in a truck accident, 10-19-93. The



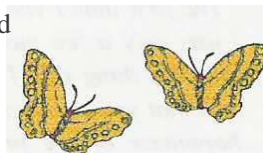
family has chosen a sunshine, cross and an angel to represent Brent.

Two sons of Luther and Rosemary Smith, Jeremiah and Drew, were killed in an automobile accident, 7-23-92. Luther writes:

The robin builds a nest in a tree outside our door. Why does she build it there? Probably to be near the safety of humans, away from predators such as hawks and snakes. Also, because there is a good food supply in our nearby pool so she can feed her young. I saw the intensity in her eyes that we all as parents have in ours--the protection and well-being of our children. At their birth, our purpose in life is transferred to their upbringing. That instinct and love totally consumes our lives. Our every knowing act is for their benefit and safety. With that being known, how do we continue to live after their loss? We are in fact like the robin, we can only make decisions from our instincts. We cannot foresee the loss of our children and when it happens, we must blame ourselves because their safety and welfare was our responsibility. In fact, we did follow

every avenue for the happiness and safety of our children. There is nothing instinctively that can explain this tragedy in our lives so we must turn to our faith and spirituality. We must develop a sense of destiny that our loss was what was supposed to be. We must allow our faith to become a guiding path for the rest of this life. This, in no way, means that we can give up or that life ceases to be. Simply, we must approach it from a different avenue from which we began. Our baby robins are about to fly away. They have outgrown their nest and their Mom and Dad have done their duty. As human parents, our duty is never done whether our young have flown away or simply left the nest.

Drew and Jeremiah's symbols are yellow butterflies.



Joe and Susan Walters' 4-year-old son, Ralph, was killed in a truck accident. Joe is currently studying to become a chaplain. He shares:

On July 29th, 1993 our only child, Ralph, and I were hit by two dump trucks. My little Buddy is dead and it is surprising that I did not die as well. For some reason God chose for me to live on. In the last 22 months, and even now, I have been in a dark place. A place of grief. A place of pain. A place of despair. I attempt now to share with you something of my struggle within this dark place.

The first thing I must say is: I have found no answers to the deepest questions of this experience. Why has this happened? Why does an almost 5 year old boy have to die? Why is there sickness and suffering and pain in a world that is supposed to be the creation of an all-good and an all-powerful God? Questions that have been asked for centuries. A dark mystery for which, at this point, I have not found a satisfactory answer.

Paul shares with us in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (NIV) These verses of scripture came to mind soon after the accident, and I thought how can I be thankful when my little buddy is dead? How can any of us be thankful when we are dealing with life's tragedies, life in the pits of darkness?

As I pondered this I thought of Job. Was Job thankful? Was he thankful for the loss of his children? Was he thankful that his wife told him "to go ahead curse God and die?" No! He tore his robes and shaved his head. He spent seven days and seven nights with his friend, not saying a word. And when he did open his mouth, "He cursed the day of his birth." In all that Job had lost, I think Job 23 Verse 3 sums it up.

"If only I knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling!" He couldn't find God! God wouldn't talk to him! Does that sound like a man that is thankful? I can identify with Job: the grief, the pain, the not finding God.

There is not all darkness in the story of Job. There is a ray of light for Job and for us. Even when Job could not be thankful he was faithful. He said, "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him." (Job 12:15) Job 23:16-17 "God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me. Yet I am not silenced by the darkness, by the thick darkness that covers my face." (NIV)

In the midst of pain, despair, even the threat of death, Job was faithful and placed his hope in the God who made him.

I also thought of Abraham. Was Abraham always thankful? Abraham waited for years for his son, Isaac, to be born. Abraham could be thankful for his son. But we also know that God told Abraham to sacrifice the son who had been so long anticipated! How could Abraham begin to understand what the Lord was doing? Wasn't

Isaac the key to the promises of God? I can't imagine how Abraham felt or what he thought as he made his way up that mountain with Isaac. Isaac carrying the wood for the burnt offering asked, "The fire and the wood are here but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" As a father I can't believe that Abraham was thankful at this point, but he was faithful. Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." He tied up Isaac and laid him on the altar and took his knife to slay his son. An angel of the Lord stopped him and a ram was provided for the sacrifice. Was Abraham thankful as he prepared to sacrifice his son? He wasn't thankful but he was faithful.

Am I thankful today? I have to be honest with you and say that I am not thankful that Ralph died. No angel protected him that day. No ram was provided in his place. I am thankful for Susan giving birth to Ralph and being his mother. I am thankful for the memories of Ralph--memories of his smile, of the big hug he always gave me, of the times we wrestled on the living room floor, of sitting in my lounge chair with him on my lap, of reading him a story at bedtime. I am thankful for the four years we had Ralph here with us.

I don't have the answer to why bad things happen to us. Especially when we do our best to live as God would want us to. I don't have the answer to why Ralph had to die! But I believe what God wants is for us to understand as best we humanly can from his perspective. The problem is that our perspective is limited and often wrong. Our perspective is often clouded by our circumstances. My perspective as a parent is not very good! I want to touch, hear and see my little buddy. I want to see him grow up to go to school, to become an adult, to live beyond me. I have to remind myself that this is good from Ralph's perspective. He is where he would want to be. He

knew God loved him and now he understands God's love better than I. Somehow Ralph's death is good from God's perspective.

In the midst of the pain, in the midst of the darkness, I have found a ray of light. A ray of light that I believe can help us as we experience darkness and pain. What ties us together--Job, Abraham, me, YOU, is that we can be thankful through faith. Even when we can't be thankful, we can be FAITHFUL! What God expects of us is being faithful and seeking to understand life from His perspective. Being faithful to God even when our perspective is limited, even when our perspective is clouded allows us to get a glimpse of what God's perspective is. Maybe like me, you are dealing with pain, despair, darkness that seems to overwhelm you. What God would have you and me do is to be faithful as we seek to understand life from his perspective.

I am not thankful that my son is dead! I don't understand why God let this happen! But I trust that someday I will get a glimpse of God's perspective. I can be faithful to the God that I know my little buddy is with. I am thankful for the grace that God has given me through Jesus. I am thankful that the grace God has given me assures me that RALPH is with HIM and that someday I will be with HIM too!

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

"May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. (NIV)



Ralph's symbols are international children.

Each Derby Day, the women at Cumberland College have a Derby Brunch. This year the theme was Quilting, and I have taken some of the writings of Dr. Gina Herring and changed them, (ever so slightly) to give meaning to what I would like to do for **J.I.M. 's Picnic**.

Welcome to "**Aunt Dinah's Quilting Party**," a gathering celebrated by Kentucky songwriter Stephen Foster in the 1850's and enjoyed by generations of American women as a social and creative opportunity. Of course, I'm talking about the traditional quilting bee, a symbol of women's companionship and community which grew out of the pioneer woman's struggle to make beauty out of barrenness, to find female friendship in an alien land. Thus, through quilting, American women transformed domestic duty into a treasured ritual and record of their shared lives and experiences. Harriet Beecher Stowe describes a typical quilting this way: "Thus the day was spent in friendly gossip as they quilted and rolled and talked and laughed. . .One might have learned in that instructive assembly how best to keep moths out of blankets; how to make fritters of Indian corn undistinguishable from oysters; how to bring up babies by hand; how to mend a cracked teapot; how to take grease from a brocade; how to reconcile absolute decrees with free will; and how to make five yards of cloth answer the purpose of six.

Listen to Aunt Jane of Kentucky, a wise matriarch and master quilter: "How much piecin' a quilt is like livin' a life! You can give the same kind of pieces to two persons, and one will make a **nine-patch** and one'll make a **wild goose chase** and there will be two quilts made out of the same kind of pieces, and jest as different as they can be. And this is jest the way with livin'! The Lord sends us the pieces but we can cut them out and put 'em together pretty much to Suit ourselves, and there's, a heap more in the cuttin' out

and the sewin' up than there is in the caliker. "

Through quilting, women have told their stories and sustained their spirits. "Patchwork?" muses folklorist Eliza Jane Culvert. "Ah no. It was memory, imagination, history, biography, joy, sorrow, philosophy, religion, romance, realism, life, love, and death and over all, like a halo, the love of the artist for his work and the soul's longings for earthly immortality."

ROSE OF SHARON

My whole life is in thai quilt.
All my joys, and all my sorrows
stitched into those little pieces.

When I was proud of the boys,
and when I was downright provoked
When the girls annoyed me,
and when they warmed my heart.

And John, too.
He was stitched into that quilt,
him and all the years we were married
The times I sat there loving him, hating
him.

as I pieced the patches together.
It took me more than twenty years,
nearly twenty five, I reckon,
in the evenings, after supper
when the children were all put to bed
I tremble sometimes when I remember
what that quilt knows.

(poem found in ANNONYMOUS
WAS A WOMAN)

Looking at Quilts

Who decided what is useful in its
beauty means less than what has no
function besides beauty (except its
weight in money)?

Art without frames: it held parched
corn, it covered the table where soup
misted savor, it covered the bed where
the body knit to self and other and the
dark wool of dreams.

The love of the ordinary blazes out:
The backyard miracle: *Snail's Track*

Ohio Sunflower, Sweet Gum Leaf, Moon over the Mountain.

In the pattern *Tulip* and *Peony* the
sense of design masters the essence of
what sprawled in the afternoon; called
conventionalized to render out the in-
telligence, the graphic wit.

Some have a wistful jaded posey
yearning:

Star of the Four Winds, Star of the West, Queen Charlotte's Crown.

In a crabbed humor as jar from pom-
pous as a rolling pin, you can trace
wrinkles from smiling under a scorch-
ing grasshopper sun:

Monkey Wrench The Drunkard's Path Foul's Puzzle, Puss in the Corner Robbing Peter to Pay Paul, and the deflating Hearts and Gizzards.

Pieced quilts, patchwork from best
gowns, winter woolens, linens, blankets,
worked jigsaw of the memories of
braided lives precious scraps: women
were buried but their clothing wore all.

Out of death from childbirth at six-
teen, hard work at forty, out of love for
the trumpet vine and the melon. they is-
sue to us:

Rocky Road to Kansas, Job's Troubles, Crazy Ann, The Double Irish Chain, The Tree of Life:

this quilt might be the only arti-
fact a woman would ever see, yet she
did not doubt what we had forgotten,
that out of her potatoes and colic, saw-
dust and blood she could create: to-
gether, alone, she seized her time and
made new.

--Marge Piercy

RAINBOW

I've been a hard worker all my life,

But most of my work has been the kind
that perishes with the using, as the
Bible says.

Why, Law, if a woman was to see all the
dishes she'd have to wash before
she died, piled up before her in one
pile,
She'd lie right down and die then and
there.

I've always had the name of being a
good housekeeper,
But when I'm dead and gone,
There ain't anybody going to think of
the floors I swept,
The tables I scrubbed.
But when one of my grandchildren,
One of my greatgrandchildren looks at
that quilt I pieced,
She'll think of me,
And wherever I am then,
I'll know I ain't forgotten.

(poem found in ANONYMOUS WAS
A WOMAN)

This description of *quilting* might
well apply to our picnic. Certainly,
as fellow travelers, we share lives
and experiences; our group is a
"community" of shared struggles
and heartache. That is why "quilt-
ing" is a theme for our picnic. We
will be reaffirming our commitment
to each other and to "piecing" to-
gether our lives after our great loss.

When you come to the picnic, I
will have a *Crazy Quilt* that you can
sign with your loved ones' name,
birth and death dates (or whatever.)
We will then have a record of our
coming together as a "community."
Can't wait to see you!

There's only one thing better than
Chocolate, and that's err. ?? ??
Hmmm. Well, I'll think of it later...

I will let you
know the an-
swer at the pic-
nic.



