

LAMENTATIONS

Issue 49

S.U.CC.E.S.S.

October, 1996



is such a beautiful, reflective time of the year. The leaves are bursting into vibrant colors, the temperature is warm during the day and crisp at night. The animals are preparing for the winter by *laying* away food and growing warm coats. When *lay* is used as a verb, it means to beat or strike down with force; to set in order or position; to impose as a duty, burden, or punishment; to prepare or position for action or operation; to submit for examination and judgment; to apply oneself vigorously; to leave alone; to remove; to put on the agenda. We fellow travelers are falling also.

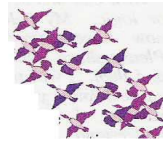
If we can put our grief aside for just a moment, look at it objectively, and apply these definitions of *lay* in chronological order, it will give us a blueprint for dealing with our grief.

When our loved one died, we felt as if we were *beaten* and had been *struck* down by the *force* of our grief. After a few weeks, we felt as if we had been *left alone* in our grief and *removed* from everything and everybody. We had been *imposed with the duty*, and *burden* of our own grief and were *being punished* with more than we could ever bear. We wanted to be *left alone* by those who were trying to explain "Why?" and we wanted to be *removed* from the *agenda* of grief.

After a few weeks, we are *struck* by the realization that their death has really happened; we cannot change it and now we have to find

an *agenda* for the remainder of our lives. At this point we need to *submit for examination* and not be too *judgmental* of ourselves or others. We have to *prepare* our agenda and *position* it into the proper order for the *vigorous* journey through our grief work.

As you anticipate the birds and geese flying south for the winter, you will notice that they fly in a V formation. Its symmetry is not only beautiful, but functional. This formation gives the birds 81 % greater flying range.



When the lead bird is tired, he falls back and another takes his place. If a bird drops out for any reason, two birds will also drop out to be with it. We who are grieving can learn so much from the birds. By "flying" together, we can give each other greater "flying range" as we journey to our S.U.C.C.E.S.S. The V is for our eventual "victory" over our intense grief and it can symbolize the eventual acceptance of our great loss. When we release the sore (painfully sensitive) grief, we can then soar (to rise or increase dramatically; to ascend to a higher or more exalted level) with the eagles.



Sunday, October 13, is **National Children's Day**. Last year, you were encouraged to designate this day as a day of celebrating our children's lives. This year I challenge you to make a difference in the life of a child who needs special attention. What better way of remembering and honoring our children

that have died? Please, share how you have made a difference in that child's life.



Indian Summer is always a respite from the cold, nippy weather we have just before winter hits with a cold, numbing blast. It is a period of warmer, milder weather which occurs in late autumn. There is this wonderful passage from the book, **A Cherokee Feast of Days**:

We thought they would last forever-- those old ones who taught us, bent us, sweetened our lives. We thought our questions would always go to them, and answers would return in familiar voices. And suddenly, like the vapor mists that lift and fade on sun-struck mountain tops, they were gone. They slipped past the boundaries to joy and rest without limit.

We never really lose anyone. If they were ever a part of our lives, they are always a part of our lives.

Speak to me of serenity, of treasures yet to be found, of peace that flows like a river. Find me a place in the sunlight to sit and listen to the sweet inner voice that says so quietly, "Peace, be still."

Native Americans give dream catchers to expectant mothers. The Dream Catcher legend:

Dreams float around in the night air, both good and bad. A dream catcher, when hung, moves freely in the night air and catches the dreams as they float by. The good dreams know the way and slip through the hole in the center, then slide down to the sleeper below. The bad dreams, not knowing the way, get entangled in the webbing and perish with the first light of the new day.

As you see the cobwebs this fall, may they remind you of only **good** dreams.



Grief Grafts'

October 17 is Jim's birthday and my mother wrote the following poem to him in 1986;

*Birthdays bring pleasures, as well as
some pain:
Older-but wiser, with more knowledge
gained;
More adept at carrying the loads we
must bear,
More faith to trust in His Love and His
care.*

*More understanding of both friend and foe,
Hence, more love on others we're apt to
bestow.
Birthdays are milestones, marking how
far we've come;
They bring serious thoughts as well as
some fun.*

*To all those who love us, we grow
dearer year by year-
So-Jim, you can be very glad today
that another birthday's here!
With our love and best wishes
Mom and Dad Lynch*

Stephanie, the 21-year-old daughter of Mary Kate Gach, was stalked and murdered 10-9-92. Mary Kate wrote the following letter to Stephanie on her birthday last year;

*A Letter to My Child on Her 24th Birthday
My Lovely Stephanie,*

I see your radiant face everywhere, your gentle smile beaming your good will out to all of God's creatures. I hear your voice each time I breathe, speaking soothingly and saying, "It's OK, Mom, it's OK." Stephanie, how I wish to believe. I reach out and touch your smooth fair skin and hug you as tightly as possible--holding on, holding on. I see the halo of your thick brown hair as it bounces around that head which you hold high and proudly. I watch your slender arms swinging alongside your young woman's slim body and your long legs taking great strides across the grass, as you excitedly head toward your destination--and your destiny.

Fair young maiden, humble child of my womb who graced my life for a little while--for too few days and nights--thank you for being you, for giving

meaning to my life. You were heaven sent and then you returned home, received by the Creator who is able to perfectly protect you as I could not.

Brightness has disappeared from the earth. The sun changes angles once again and the days become shorter. Hot late August air and the heaviness of death press down upon me as I reluctantly relive your last weeks on earth. I seem to be caught in a time loop without hope for any relief or refreshing reprieve. Never again will orange and gold autumn return. There is only brown October deadness and the early frost which prematurely covers over your life's sweetness with dark, hard, chilling cold.

How can this be? There is no sense or logic. My beloved daughter, you now have complete understanding. Please share some of it with me now and then. I will try to keep going, because I know you wish me to--but if I cannot, I know well that you understand.



Love.
Mom
Stephanie's symbol is a
brown rabbit.

Wes and Farrell Jean Washam's 16-year-old son, John Mark, was killed in an automobile accident, May 20, 1990. John Mark wrote this poem:

The Lost Dove

*As I sat listening to
To magnificent tales of fun,
Impossible fantasy,*

*I longed to be part of this,
Life in the fast lane,
Flying, though shot from a gun.*

*I sought to break out
To rid myself of this childish and lifeless
microcosm
Which I entitled my own.*

*I dreamt of soaring with eagles
And found myself there
As their recounts I pretended to own.*

*As time swept past, these frequent flights
Into my sacred world, where lights turned
red and
Were purged of dread, I was misled.*

*This my world of golden fawns, dancing
upon dreamt-of lawns,*

*Ceased to heal my soul's cancer, and I
writhed in agony,
As I sought to be free of my childhood
bonds.*

*I had to go out, taste and explore,
I had to know, to beat this unconquer-
able foe,
Crush the obstacle manifested in my
dreamy lore.*

*Comprehension came to me suddenly, a
slap in the face.
This obtrusion was reality;
Thus I implored myself to act with haste,
to avoid personal disgrace.*

*The decision, my downfall I
concede.
I vaunted into the unknown,
The time of my life was had indeed.*

*I laughed and talked for hours on
end
With vivacious people
I dared call friend.*

*Though when morning came
I looked back with shame,
For I realized;*

*As I had soared with the eagles of
my dreams,
I had sacrificed what I had which I val-
ued most:
The ability to fly like a dove.*

John Mark's symbol is a
dove.

Brian, the 34-year-old son of Don and Carolyn Jacobs, died 3-2-96. Brian's brother, Don, Jr., eulogized his brother:

I cannot even begin to tell you how proud I am to be the brother of Brian Jacobs or how honored I am to have this opportunity to pay tribute to his name and his life.

Outside the walls of this funeral home, time goes on. Right now people are doing all sorts of things to celebrate life. For us right here, time is standing still. We are mourning his death which was so unexpected and so tragic; however, we are here today to celebrate his time on this earth and remember how he affected the people he knew.

I think there are some people here who may have met Brian and liked him. There are some who were well acquainted with Brian and were very fond

of him. Then there are many here today who truly knew him, understood him, respected him and loved him.

Brian and I were not very close while growing up, but over the last six years we became very close, Brian was a mentor to me. He was always encouraging and very supportive of me in whatever I wanted to do. We understood one another perfectly and had a tremendous bond because we were two sons working in a family business. When Brian spoke to anyone, he always talked about the things that were important to that person--not himself. Brian had tremendous insight in understanding people and how we lived together. In describing Brian, I would use the words "kind," "considerate," "caring," "committed," and most of all, "courageous." He was indeed a mental giant.

In order to give you an idea as to how Brian's mind worked, I want to read you the first page from his journal:

"6/27: A long, uneventful day somehow brought me to start this journal finally. The idea came up several months ago and recently became a necessity beyond an idea. Major life changes bring about many questions to which I only have partial answers, unfinished thoughts. They all revolve around personal discovery. To call this my Journ(ey)al of self-discovery would be a little grandiose and overwhelming. But take out the implied responsibility and I think that's what I'll find this to be. It was a process of self-discovery that provoked this need to start recording my thoughts--that clarity and completion would come out the tip of my pen. Off to bed."

He was a fascinating person and was conversant and knowledgeable in so many different areas. Interests ranged from Philosophy to Physiology to food. I think food was his favorite. In his apartment I found several different books that he had been reading. There was a token classic called 1984 by George Orwell. But his preferred readings were a bit more eclectic. They are as follows: The Origin of the Universe, Democracy in America, The Rise of the West, Image vs. Reality, Reinventing Work and Great Possessions: An Amish Fanner's Journal a series of essays for the Amish Magazine "Family Life." I would like to read an excerpt from the foreword, written by Wendell

Berry who wrote the book Small is Beautiful which I have read:

The pleasures (the author) is talking about are the pleasures of natural history. And he is most likely to pursue these pleasures of his leisure, not in some "getaway" or vacation place, but on his farm and in his neighborhood, the places of his work. It is equally important to notice that these pleasures are pursued also in the midst of work. Time and again, (he) tells us of something he observed while he was plowing or mowing. And so we see that another unity that the Amish have preserved is that of work and pleasure. The lives of fellow creatures and our delight in those lives are great possessions. And these are secured and made available by great possessions that are cultural. This book announces on every page that the world is good, an article of faith that is here brought to rest upon experience. That (the author) and his neighbors look at the world and find it good, and that they honor its goodness in their daily work, permits them to say something that, after a decade of severe agricultural depression, is at once astonishing and profoundly reassuring: "farming is good."

It is so true that Brian's greatest possession was his delight in the lives of others. His values were so simple and somewhat similar to this Amish farmer. There is no doubt that the world would be a better place if there were more people who had those values.

When I went to his home in California to pack up his belongings, I was absolutely amazed at how few things he had. There were a few items of clothing, his books, and that was all. No objects of great value. He was not a materialistic person whatsoever. He could have afforded a more lavish lifestyle but he chose to live life this way. There was one thing I found that was very important to Brian. I found pictures of Meredith, Brian's niece, right next to the phone. He was so enchanted with her and always thrilled to have the opportunity to be with her. I also found pictures of her in his van. Brian loved his entire family--his nephew Cameron, his niece Bethany, his grandmother most definitely, but little Meredith, the newest addition to the family, truly captivated Brian.

I was searching desperately for some kind of memento that I could take with me, but I could find nothing. As I left, I grabbed some spare change on the

table in his bedroom and put it in my right coat pocket. I also got the spare change in his van and put it in my left coat pocket. As I was flying back to Phoenix, I recall how sad I was for not having anything to remember him by.

This is so uncanny how this unfolds. When I got back to my apartment, I emptied both of my coat pockets. I picked out the oldest penny in each of the two groups. One was minted in 1977, the other one in 1982-, five years apart. It so happens that Brian and I are five years apart.

When I got back to Lexington. I took the older one, cleaned it up and made it shine. It is absolutely the most beautiful penny I have ever seen. It's like it was reminted; born again. I decided to leave the younger one unpolished because it is the older one that was truly special. I put some glue on the tail side of the younger one, put him face down, put the older one on top, face up, and pressed the two together. Now they will always be together and always be looking over the other's shoulder just as two brothers should. I have decided to call this my "Brothers Penny." "Brothers" has no apostrophe because it belongs to neither, but it is plural because they are two. "Penny is singular because together they are one. I am anxious to go through his things in storage, but I doubt that I will find anything as precious as my "Brothers Penny."

This is now my good luck charm. I should now be twice as lucky. Brian and I are the last two people to touch it. It is so very simple, but Brian would have liked it this way.

Brian visited me in Phoenix for an entire week in early February, and I have very fond memories of his stay. I remember that we were making pizza one night. Brian and I both loved to cook. I had some tomato puree in the refrigerator, but Brian insisted that we had to use pizza sauce instead. We debated the issue for at least ten minutes. Another night we were watching the news and there was a story about the GOP nominations. I made the comment that we might be so unfortunate as to have another four years of Bill Clinton in the office. Brian was quick to ask what I meant by that. I was smart enough to back down quickly and changed the subject; I knew I would not win.

One afternoon we climbed Camelback Mountain, which is a 1200 foot elevation gain in I mile and 1/8/h. We

climbed right up to the top and for some strange reason I took my camera with me. It was unusual for me to do that. I had a picture taken of us on top of that mountain overlooking the Valley of the Sun. This was the last picture taken of Brian while he was with us. This is exactly how I will remember Brian, us together on top of Camelback Mountain. I actually think Brian lived every day on top of that mountain. And today he is on the highest mountain of all enjoying the view.

Brian sent me a card for my birthday in late January and it begins: "Happy Birthday, Don. Are you 29? I'm not even sure. I wanted to say 30, but it seems so much older than 29." He knew how old I was, but he could not resist a joke like that. He goes on to say that Mom and Dad would be visiting us for Mom's birthday on March 13, but unfortunately Brian passed away.

The salutation is one that I have never seen before. His last words are "Keep the Faith - Love, Brian." Well, my brother, I promise to you in front of all these people, with God as my witness that I will, your family will, and your friends will keep the faith. We will keep the faith in remembrance of you because you are so deserving of that, and because we all love you so much and will miss you more than you will ever know.

The message that I want you to take home with you today is a message of love. Remember that it is never too late to say "thank you" and it is never too late to say "I love you."

There is no doubt that this loss wretches the heart, but the support that we have received from all of you helps the heart heal.

And to close, I show you my "Brothers Penny" and clench it in my fist. And I use Brian's last words to me because he wants everyone he knew to "Keep the Faith."

Brian's symbol is an eagle.



Art and Eleanor Foss' 28-year-old son, John, died from bladder cancer, 10-5-93. Artie likes to believe that our children's death dates are the birth days to their eternal life. Isn't that a wonderful way of looking at the death date? I hope you will continue to share the ways you observe your child's death date.

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



Jerry Jonas' two sons, Leon Jr., and Wayne, were killed in an automobile accident, 10-26-90. Jerry writes a newsletter entitled **footprints**. She shared:

Before my sons died, I loved the beautiful fall colors and winter just meant that Christmas was coming and these seasons were something to look forward to. But my sons died in the fall and the changing of the colors of the leaves for me became a reminder that death was coming and I relived their death all over again each year.

Praise God, now the fall season has changed for me. Today I planted some ugly brown dead looking bulbs. They reminded me of life not death. Of course, I now have only about 500 bulbs planted from the past four years and today's made 572. I thought about how all our children are laid in the ground and covered just like the bulbs. In fact, one kind had to be planted six inches which reminded me that our children are placed six feet. But this is not the end for the bulbs or our children. It is the beginning of a new life where they will bloom forever. Death is not the end for a child of God.

*"Just remember... every flower that ever bloomed had to go through a whole lot of dirt to get there." Quote from Barbara Johnson's book, **Mama, get the Hammer**.*

In the July issue of **footprints** Jerry remarked:

Leon Jr. and Wayne died in October, and February was Leon Jr.'s first birthday after their death. I knew as a mother I needed to still do things for my son on his birthday. I started that morning making him his favorite cake, then took balloons to the cemetery to place on his grave and told him "Happy Birthday" then later that evening we as a family, celebrated by eating his cake and lighting a special candle with his name on it.

On Wayne's birthday in August, I added giving blood to making his cake, By doing something for my children on

their special days, it also helped me remember that I am still their mother and I want to always remember them. I have made cakes for five years now.

Some mothers have placed an ad in the newspaper of their children's special days. One mother and I went to her son's grave and I read some scriptures and lit a candle and prayed. For one mother, I was able to get a minister and his wife to come to a small service at the cemetery. One of our mothers decorated her son's street signs. She had adopted the street in her son's memory. I helped two mothers do a service with programs, balloons and light sticks and over two hundred young people came to their services.

For anniversaries, one mother did a small service at the spot her son was murdered. Our family had a "Celebration of Life" service, with balloons, light sticks and refreshments afterward. Jewel and I helped some parents do a small service for their child at the cemetery for their anniversary.

Our family invited church members and friends to have a special service at the cemetery, then they went back to their house for their child's birthday with cake and ice cream. They also put up a bed sheet between two trees and had everyone write a birthday message to their child.

Leon's and Wayne's symbols are two roses and a car.



Bessie, the 14-year-old daughter of Wendell and Pat Root, was killed in an auto accident 10-29-94. Pat lamented:

Our support group is still going on. Sometimes we have only 4 or 5, other times more. But I'm hoping more people will come. I'm amazed at the people who we've invited, that say they are going to come, but don't. I don't understand. It helps me so much to be with and talk to other parents who have lost that precious child. I've met so many wonderful people through my grief. I still get pictures every day for my memory board. It's now full and overflowing.

Bessie will be gone two years, October 29th. I dread it so. I miss her so,

so much and love her so. But I know she is with the Lord and that sustains me daily.

This is an especially hard year for me. Bessie would have been a Junior this year, driving to school. Junior Prom, dating. These things are so very hard for me. When I see her fellow classmates driving, it breaks my heart. I know God does sustain us, but sometimes I feel I will surely die from heart-ache, so we all need to lift each other up daily for prayer.

Pat is a beautician and one of her customers wrote this poem:

I talked with you today for just a little while. The conversation was pleasant, I often saw you smile.

But I could see the sorrow when I looked into your eyes. I could see a mother who is broken and for her child she cries.

You shared with me your memories of this precious child, a lifetime of love you knew in such a short while.

I could see your soul lifted each time you spoke her name, you gave the Lord "thanks" into your life she came.

You held her close and loved her on this earth below, then one day Jesus said to her, "My child it's time to go. In Heaven the angels are waiting, I have prepared a place for you, come on home now, your mansion is through."

"But what about my mother?" I can almost hear her say, "Lord will you please wipe her tears away?"

"My child she is faithful and with my help she will be strong, in Heaven she will meet you before too very long."

With this her heart felt comfort, her mind at ease, into God's waiting arms her spirit was received.

We talked a little longer, then went our separate ways. My life is somehow different after seeing you today.

To me, you seemed so wise as I looked beyond the pain. You know that your loss is surely Heaven's gain.

I won't pretend to know the heartache you must feel, but be assured someday, your hurt the Lord will heal.

I'll pray for you each day for the Lord to see you through, for him; to give you strength until he returns for you.

On that day your spirit will soar as you no longer have to wait. Your child

will be standing just inside the gate. Together you will walk through that city so grand, a mother and her child. at last together again.

Sheila Henson
June 13, 1996

Bessie's symbols are hearts and balloons



June Dunning's 43-year-old son, Geary, died 3-19-90. June declared:

I think I am doing better.

I stepped out on faith, trusting the Lord to help me each day. I have chosen a deer and a star for Geary's symbols.



Janet Mart's 18-year-old son, Marc was accidentally shot and died 3-22-93. Janet is very active with the Organ Donation Program in Kentucky. Janet mentioned several of the projects in which she is currently involved:

The first quarter of 1996 was filled (and overflowing many days) with the intense lobbying effort for the passage of the revised Juvenile Crime bill. It is impossible to convey the myriad of feelings associated with the success of our group effort in changing the antiquated 1988 Juvenile Criminal Code. I do know that you understand perfectly how each of us involved in this effort to right a wrong and hopefully, prevent other parents the agony we faced when up against the Juvenile system. The similarities between the placement of a guardrail and the passage of a new law are very specific--mothers that must act in the face of terrible agony.

I also was honored to be asked to speak for National Crime Victims Week in the Capital Rotunda. I have no idea what I said because the other victims speaking were so profound in their victimization and yet so joyfully surviving, my story seemed less. Many people have thought I was "not quite right" when I say that I am lucky. The experience of listening to these extremely brave individuals confirmed my sustaining belief that my loss was indeed terrible and undeserved, but in many ways. I was and continue to be blessed.

The end of March came and I was looking forward to a relaxing spring and summer. Unfortunately, the management company I worked for in Frankfort which managed the hotel, did not renew its contract. Abruptly, as of April 1, I was employed by a new company at the Frankfort property. I thought all my seniority, benefits, security, etc., had evaporated.

I was lucky again, the previous company asked me if I would be able to relocate to another of their hotels. What an amazing, scary time! I have been married and/or caring for children since I was 19 and here was an opportunity to make a decision solely based on my needs, wants, desires. I chose South Bend, Indiana. I've been here since May 16 and for the first time in a long time, I've actually told my supervisor that I really like my job twice!

Keith, the 14-year-old son of Cindy Brooks died June 22, 1996. Cindy tells us about Keith:

Keith loved the outdoors. He was always fishing and swimming and was working in tobacco with Brian Stites (his cousin) who was also killed in the automobile accident. There was also a third person in the truck. My son Keith was almost 15. The accident was on June 22, 1996, and his birthday was July 20th. We were planning to have a big party for his 15th birthday.

Basketball was his main interest. He had played basketball from preschool at the boys club, through the 8th grade. He was getting ready for the 9th grade and he had told me he was ready to get started back in school which started August 16.

He had so many friends. It was unbelievable the people at the funeral home. All three boys were shown at the same time. It was suppose to last from 4 until 8:00, but lasted until 10:30.

I have been reading grief books and so many people, some who have lost children before me, have been writing to me or calling. This really helps.

Keith's symbol is a basketball.



Rhonda, the 17-year-old daughter of Ron and Louise Barger, died two and a half months after an

automobile accident due to complications. She died 9-5-92. Louise divulged:

It has been 4 years since Rhonda's death. I still can't feel anything but numbness and a void that can never be filled on this earth. I believe this is deeper than an ocean the grief I feel, but I still function as a zombie and still cry many rivers of tears. I pray for some sense of my loss.

Rhonda's symbols are balloons and a white rose.



Linda Graves, the 42-year-old daughter of Loretta Deso, died from cancer, 7-28-88. Loretta was in a terrible accident:

I seem more depressed this year. It has been really hard for me. I had a bad accident in March so it has been hard to cope with it. I have had to have a lot of therapy but am feeling much better. My mother is still with me. She cannot do anything but she is a lot of comfort to me. I think that is what makes me so depressed. I miss the comfort I would get from Linda as she was such a caring person and we were so close.

My roses are so beautiful this year. I have brought so many to Linda's grave. I also have one near her picture all the time.

Linda's symbols are roses and a poodle.



Peggy Miller's 21-year old-son, Thomas, died from his own hand, 9-10-95. Peggy shared:

I had two sons, and we were all very close. I've been divorced for a long time so it was the three of us. Tom's death has left such a void in our lives. It has been extremely difficult to deal with because he was planning on transferring to a 4-year school the next month. He was extremely bright, especially in computers and was planning on becoming a computer analyst. Keith, my younger son, is having a very difficult time because he and Tom were best friends as well as brothers. He had just graduated from High School in May. I admire him though, because he

has continued with college and is working part time.

Tom was suffering from chronic depression, a fact I realized too late and something I will never forgive myself for.

I keep waiting for this to get better, but it hasn't. Sometimes it seems like it is getting worse. People tell me "time will help." So far, it hasn't. I know you probably do not have anyone in my area (Wheeling, WV) who receives the newsletter, but if you have anyone who has a similar situation and would like to correspond, please do.

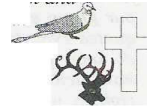
Peggy wrote the following poem:

*You touched the earth for
such a brief time
But your going has left such
a great void
In the lives of those you left behind.*

*What wouldn't we give to
change the day...
and the way...
you left us to mourn.*

*Our only consolation
Our only relief
from our never ending
overwhelming grief
is the thought
That now you are in the
hands of a great, just and
merciful God*

Tom's symbols are a dove, cross and a deer.



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:

FOREVER FREE

*Summer has said good-bye
(as you did just last night).
The autumn leaves are falling-
Ever so quietly
(like the tears from my eyes).
Winter will soon be here
But you won't be
(except in memory).
Spring will follow, and then summer again*

What was a beginning turned into an end.

You're free--as I want to be

Angels and hearts symbolize their children.



Ralphie, the 19-year-old son of Ralph and Dana Coomer, was killed in an automobile accident, 6-11-94. Dana sent a poem she received from a mother in Florida. She felt that it was our children talking to us.

*I have a Place in Heaven
Please don't sing sad songs for me.
Forget your grief and fears
For I am in a perfect place,
Away from pain and tears.*

*I'm far away from hunger
I have a place in Heaven
With the Master at my side.*

*My life on earth was very good
As earthly lives can go.
But paradise is so much more
Than anyone can know.*

*My heart is filled with happiness
And sweet rejoicing too.
To walk with God is perfect peace.
A Joy forever new.*

Ralph's symbols are praying hands and an Eagle.



Monica, the 19-year-old daughter of Hershel and Judy Haste, died due to complications from Cerebral Palsy, 4-3-93. Judy has found, as we have, or will find out, that others don't understand. She lamented:

I was going through some things tonight and found the poem I wrote about Monica. When she died, my mother and sister looked everywhere for "Heaven's Special Child." I have found it and I also found the original poem given to me just after Monica's birth. It was so strange that after all this time I ran across them. No one has ever read the poem I wrote and when I asked my family if they wanted to read it, no one was interested. I guess time has gone on for them faster than it has for myself. I knew you would

*understand how I felt when I came across it.
It is the same feeling when I find an old
Mother's Day card they helped Monica
make at school her first year.*

Judy wrote this poem shortly after
Monica's birthday in 1992.

Monica

*Precious she may be to only a few.
Retarded she may be to many
My little girl is the only girl I'll have
While others may have plenty.*

*She is eighteen in years, but her mind is only
months.*

But the smile and her hugs show lots of guts.

God left her out of a lot of things.

Like the ability to run,

Walk or play on the swings.

She will never have to fight

Or lose her life for a cause

She will never know hate

Nor hate the laws.

She only knows love

For love is all that is shown her.

My daughter is a gift and a small wonder.

Monica's symbol is a
dove.



Gary and Angie Cunningham's 21-
year-old son, Ernie, was killed in an
automobile accident, 11-10-95. Angie's
sister wrote these poems:

*Gary & Angie had their first son,
They named him Ernest Lee,
No other name would have done,
For this special baby,
Born on the 12th of December, 1973.*

*Ernie grew as he should,
According to Dr. Spock's book
Doing what all babies would,
Angie recorded all she could,
If you care to take a look.*

*It's important, you see,
It's, part of Ernie's history.
Yes, he made mischief & noise,
Just like other boys.*

*I remember their visit to our NC home.
Angie, Ernie, and Kevin.*

*Those boys would not leave our cat
alone,
But the cat did not really mind,
The boys were not ever unkind.*

*A few years later, they visited again,
By now the children numbered 4,
By now, I only reached Ernie's chin.
As he came in the door, he had a ready
joke,*

"I only eat prime rib," he spoke.

*But he did eat the ham dinner I'd prepared,
And I was happy it compared,
And my poor ego was spared.*

*Until the next time they came for
supper,*

*Ernie brought his own, a Burger King
whopper.*

*Karate, computers, comic books,
Ernie's interests were quite varied,
Was even giving the girls interested
looks.*

*But he was never too busy,
With the younger ones he'd tarry.*

*He learned from and taught
Each person he met
Leaving them wanting
To know him better yet.*

*He went on to college,
New words to explore,
And before those college years ended,
Ernie was "king of the floor."*

*He loved to argue, discuss, & debate.
He would get up early & stay up late.
To achieve his goal, what he wanted
to be,*

*To become a professor, he'd work hard
& wait.*

*Ernie had plans, skills not yet touched,
talents to explore*

*So why, Dear Lord, is he with us no
more?*

*I am so angry,
So angry at You, Lord.
You took our Ernie,
And nary a word.*

*You gave us no warning.
Not a chance for "good-bye. "
It is alarming,
That you took such a guy.*

*Each word the officer spoke
Pierced her body with an arrow*

*Then went straight to her soul.
Now where her heart used to be.
Is only a gaping hole.*

*Ernie had much to live for,
Much he could do.
He was so smart,
And fun-loving, too.*

*He had plans, you know,
His parents had them, too
But you didn't let them
See the plans through.*

*Why would you take him
Someone so young?
I'll never understand,
His song had not been sung.*

*She visits the cemetery each day.
Sometimes she takes a pretty little
spray,
And she stops to cry and pray,
Or to speak what no one else can let
her say.*

*Please, Dear Lord, in Your kindness, we
pray,
That you will allow somehow, some
way,*

*For us to know that Ernie's okay
So that we may begin to know peace
again someday.*

*She lights a candle every night.
She's waiting for a sign.
She needs to know from you, Dear
Lord,
That the arms he's in are Thine.*

*It's been hard to keep up the pretense
That she cares if the world goes a
round.
Truly, it doesn't matter and hasn't made
any sense
Since they placed Ernie's body in the
ground.*

*But, Ernie's soul,
Yes, Ernie's soul
"Dear Mom and Dad, it's not there.
The Lord has made me whole. "*

*"So, when you're ready, Mom,
don't go there every day
Because your 'best son' is beside you,
And will never go away."*

Ernie's symbol is an Apple.



Psamantha, the 8 year-old adopted
daughter of Gary and Diann Foster,

died from an asthma attack, 3-17-91. Diann wrote the following poem on behalf of Psamantha:

To My Nurses

*Tiny.
Fragile.
Born too soon.
Surrounded by machines.
Invaded by tubes.
But you
Saw underneath it all
Me.
And because you
Worked and hoped
Worked and cried
Worked and prayed
And worked
I am.*

Psamantha's symbol is a butterfly.



Luke, the 15-year-old son of Nim and Clara Patterson, died from an accidental gunshot, 9-12-94. Clara shared a poem written by Agnes Brown:

In Remembrance

*You were so loving and caring.
You were so understanding and sharing.
You could bring a smile to anyone's
face.
You liked to do things at your own pace.
You loved basketball so great and so
dear,
Not being able to play was your greatest
fear.
Being the center of attention is what
you craved,
Loving every moment when people, about
you, would rave.
You loved the girls each and every one,
Always a big flirt, and never alone.
You loved your times with the boys,
Comparing notes on who had better
toys.
Your family was a big part of your life
Who stood behind you whatever your
strife.
I think your family, friends and co
players have a pretty good idea of where
you are.
You made a great impact and was one
of the greatest friends, by far.*

*Lucas Paul Patterson, you will never
be forgotten...*

*This you can be sure of
For within our hearts, your legacy
will live on...*

*Forever in the hearts of those you
love*



Luke's symbol is a
basketball with wings and #00.

Elton and Lisa Kennedy's 16-year-old daughter, Jordan, died from AVM, 10-4-95. Lisa tells us about Jordan:

Jordan was a very beautiful, active 16-year-old. She was on the go all the time. She was my very best friend. That's not to say we didn't have our teen-age problems.

On October 3, 1995, Jordan left for school, just like any other day. Her father was working out of town and her brother (Austin) was away at college. About 6:00 p.m. that Tuesday, another mother called me and said Jordan was at her house with a very bad headache. I somehow knew something was wrong. When I got to Jordan's friend's house, she was passed out. It scared me to death. I didn't have any idea what could be wrong. We called 911. I rode in the ambulance with her to the hospital.

The doctor told us she had a very serious AVM in the brain. I had never heard of an arterial venus malformation. It had ruptured (something like an aneurysm).

I still didn't realize how serious it was. I called Elton and Austin to come home. I told them she was going to have surgery but would be fine.

At the hospital/hat night, it was like the whole school was there. But the next day they told us she was brain dead.

Our family has been devastated by this loss. We never dreamed we would out live our daughter. We miss her so much.

It is so hard to put our lives back together without her.

No one knows how parents or a brother feels with such a loss unless they have experienced it.

It will be one year since Jordan passed over on October 4th.

Jordan's symbol is a
peace sign



Gary and Viola Correll's son, Michael (15), was killed in an electrical shock-drowning 8-9-95. Viola shares Michael's death date remembrances:

A whole year has passed since the death of our son, Michael. The evening of August 9th at 6:00, we invited friends and family to the cemetery. I had a helium balloon for each person there. Each person wrote a message to Michael and when we finished, we all released them at the same time and watched them till we couldn't see them any more. It was a special time. Everyone really enjoyed it and asked if we could do it every year.

August 18th was Michael's 17th birthday and I remembered listening to the guest speaker at the Picnic in June. She suggested to keep your child's birthday alive. So, I invited friends and family over for dinner. We fixed Michael's favorite meal and had a butterfly cake. My niece, Rebekah, made a butterfly out of silk flowers to take to the cemetery. A young fellow, Jared, who was a close friend of Michael's, came into the house with a real live butterfly. That just made the whole day special.

Also, I wanted to tell you Gary and I are expecting another child in March!

Michael's symbols are a
butterfly, a policeman and
water skis.



Just a reminder of the "Spiritual Crisis Following Loss" Seminar at the **RENEW Center** in Berea, October 24, 1996. If you have questions, you may telephone 606-986-0780 or 606-986-7878. Hope to see you there!



I may be getting older, losing my eyesight, losing my hearing and my face wrinkled with "personality lines," but chocolate still puts a smile on my face!!!