

# LAMENTATIONS

Issue 5

G.R.I.E.F

February 1993

## Valentines Day

A valentine is a gift or greeting you send to someone you care about. I send this valentine to you because I care about you and what you are going through at this time.



While making this valentine, I had to manipulate not only the valentine (heart) itself, but also its content (the words). Isn't this the way of our grief? The color of our heart is truly red for we are bleeding because of our Joss. At first it is filled with "blood" because of the "amputation" of our loved one. When you see bleeding of any type you know that there is an injury, an injustice, a violation, a loss.

After the bleeding has subsided, we must then fill our hearts with something. The "fill" is our thoughts, our memories, our actions. I wanted to fill this valentine (your heart) with from me and from the many others who share your grief. There are ways we can manipulate our "words," our thoughts so that our heart may be filled with good "words." We must first deal with our grief.

In a newsletter entitled *Afterloss*, Dr. Kennedy-Reeves suggests that we share our grief

with others, that we reach out, and by reaching out we are showing our strength. We are overwhelmed by our grief, and by reading and talking with others, we will find out what is "normal" and that our feelings, **whatever they may be**, are okay.

Our grief work is unique and we must not compare ourselves to others in determining whether we are doing better or worse than they. There are so many factors that make our grief unique: Our past losses, the support network we may not have, our religious beliefs, our relationship to our loved one, our gender- all of these determine the method in which we grieve. There are no correct or incorrect ways of grieving, only *different* ways. Make a pledge to yourself that you will work through your grief, not try to skirt around it. You have to face it sometime. Believe it or not, you will find strength in knowing that you are growing as a result of your grief work.

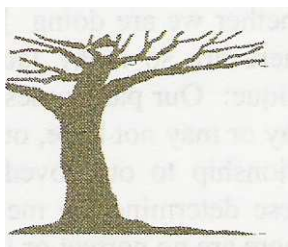
Find ways of expressing your emotions. You can talk with friends, fellow travelers of grief, a member of the clergy, a counselor, a support group, whomever. You may have the gift of writing poetry or prose. As you know, I keep a journal. This is not to be confused with a diary. You may write in it several times a day, or perhaps once a week. It is not only a way of expressing your thoughts and feelings, but it is a "growth chart" by which you can see your progress. You should express your emotions- whatever they are: pain, anger, regrets, guilt, relief: thankfulness, and when all else fails, express your grief through tears. They are so cleansing when you feel as if the pain is too great to bear. It is vital that you find some method of expression.

## Grief Grafts

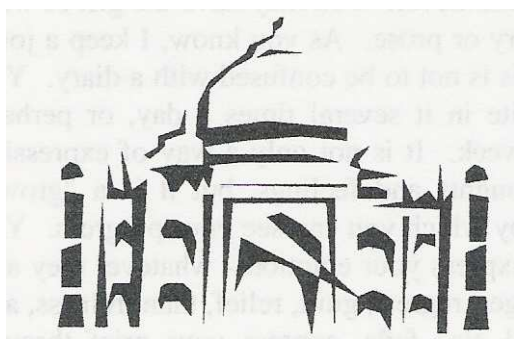
I have received so many wonderful letters and telephone calls from you and I thank you for each one of them. *LAMENTATIONS* was started out of my own need and it is also comforting to know that it has helped others. Thank you.

Woody and Donna Herndon's son Roger was killed in a plane crash August 2, 1991. It was his senior year at West Point. Just before Christmas, they sent letters to Roger's many classmates and friends and asked them to write their thoughts and/or memories of Roger. They have, and continue to receive letters which mean so much to them.

Louise Barger wrote that her 17 year old daughter Rhonda was injured in an automobile accident June, 1992 and died September 5, 1992. She expressed her loss by saying that "we're absent an essential limb from our family tree." What a beautiful statement.



Bob and Jackie Geier's 7 year old daughter Gretchen died from a brain stem carcinoma on September 12, 1992. Their friends, Keith and Mary Johnson, wrote a loving poem entitled:



### "Gretchen's Song"

*There is a castle on a cloud  
That's where I've gone to in my sleep  
There are no acres to make me weep*

*Not in my castle on a cloud  
There is a room that's full of toys  
There are a hundred girls and boys  
Nobody shouts or talks too loud  
Not in my castle on a cloud.*

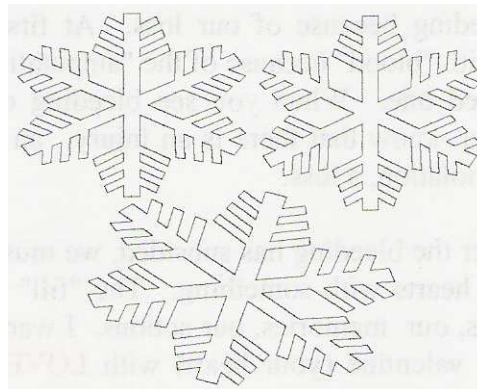
*There is a lady all in white  
She holds me and sings lullabies  
She's nice to see and soft to touch  
And says: "Gretchen, I love you very much!"*

*I know a place that's filled with joy  
I know a place where no one cries  
Crying at all is not allowed  
Not in my castle on a cloud.*

Sherry Durbin, 15, daughter of Bob and Martha Durbin died November 6, 1991 as a result of a trampoline accident. A friend of hers, Becky Bishop, wrote "Never-ending Friendship" in her town newspaper:

*In memory of a friend we will never forget. Though time may pass, a memory stays, reminding us of happy days, and the people who touched our lives, of favors done. Of those who have stood above the rest. A memory is a treasure that still survives. For Sherry her memory will live forever in our hearts. Sherry spread light when it was dark; she gave hope when there was doubt.*

*Sherry had a smile that could brighten the darkest day. Now that I realize that people come and go through life like snowflakes on a warm day. Even on the snowiest day Sherry could warm your heart with her humor and her charm.*



She continued: *I found a poem that reminds me so much of Sherry and I would like to share it with you:*

*A rose once grew where off could see sheltered  
beside the garden wall.*

*And as the days passed, it spread it's branches  
straight and tall.*



*One day a beam of light shone  
through a crevice that had opened wide  
The rose bent gently towards its  
warmth and passed beyond to the  
other side...*

*Now you who deeply feel its loss,  
be comforted the rose blooms there.*

*Its beauty even greater now nurtured by God's  
own loving care. "*

*Sherry will be a rose that will stay in our hearts  
forever.*

Dennis and Judy Carpenter's 16 year old daughter Kellie was killed in an automobile accident August 14, 1992. She was soon to receive her pilot's license and was very active in sports and other school functions. A memory Christmas tree was decorated in their home, and four days before Kellie's birthday (January 20), Dennis and Judy had a "sharing" open house for Kellie's many school friends. If they wanted, they could bring something for Kellie's tree, could share memories, or just come and be with her family. What a wonderful tribute to her.



Nancy Reynolds whose 16 year old daughter, Mary, was killed in an automobile accident in May of 1991 wrote this letter to the members of her church.

*If you're thinking you can't understand me  
these days, you are probably right,  
If you think I want it that way,  
you are wrong. .  
When I became a Christian,  
I cried every now and then.  
Now, because of Mary's death,  
I cry every day, I have found out  
this is natural with losing a child,  
If you think I don't need your prayers,  
think again!  
If you think I'm still not hurting,  
you've just not been there,  
If everyone here is thinking I don't love you,  
you are wrong,  
Maybe the pictures of her accident will help  
you to come into my world  
for as long as you look at them.*

How true the statement that you cannot judge a person until you have walked a mile in "his" shoes.

Erich Lindemann, a renowned psychiatrist, made a landmark study in 1944 and entitled it "Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief" He identifies a range of emotions and symptoms that we encounter in the course of our grief. See if you identify with these: repeated sighing, exhaustion, loss of appetite, an inner sense of unreality, feelings of guilt, a preoccupation with thoughts of the deceased, and a confusing and ultimately exhausting state that fitfully alternates between physical restlessness and unfocused, listless apathy. Lindemann stressed that these feelings and symptoms subside. As we, the griever review our relationship to the deceased, we will slowly free ourselves from the past and begin to move to the future. That is not to say that we will ever forget.

How do you know when you are progressing through your grief? Donna Herndon knew that she was progressing when she was asked to describe herself and she found herself using the word "happy." I know I am progressing because I found myself humming the other day. Prior to Young Jim's death, I sang and hummed when performing any task, but had not done so since his death--until the other day. A -letter day! I can also read my journal and see that I am working through some of my anger, frustration, and acceptance. How do you see that you are progressing?

The students here at Cumberland College call me "The Whiz" (because of my love for the computer). Thought you might like to see my new logo.

