

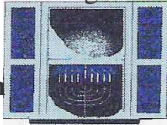


LAMENTATIONS



December is universally the most difficult month for those of us whose children have died. No matter the age of our children when they died, we are always reminded of Christmases past and the wonderful times we had together as a family unit. Our religious affiliation doesn't matter; this month is the season of giving and receiving.

The Jewish holiday, **Hanukkah** or **Chanukah** is called the *Festival of Lights* or the *Festival of Dedication*. A candle is lighted on each of the 8 days of Hanukkah in celebration and observation. This year it begins December 6.



The Christian holiday of **Christmas** is a celebration of birth of Christ and is always December 25.

December 26 is the first day of **Kwanzaa**, which is an annual Afro-American cultural festival. It was developed by Maulana (Ron) Karenga in 1966 as an alternative to Christmas commercialism and a celebration of African ancestry; it is the Swahili word for "first fruits of harvest". It is a week-long family celebration from December 26 through January 1. It is a combination of various African traditions and each night, one of seven green, red, and black candles is lit, and one of seven principles is discussed. Those principles are unity, purpose, creativity, self-determination, collective work, cooperative economics, and faith. Gifts relating to the history, culture,

or community of African Americans are exchanged.



We know this is a very difficult time for us and we need to prepare. The following ideas may help in making decisions:

1. You must decide what you can comfortably handle and let your needs be known to family and friends:
 - whether or not to talk about your loved one.
 - whether you can handle the responsibility of family dinners and parties.
 - whether you will stay here for the holidays or choose to travel this year to "get away for awhile."
2. Don't be afraid to make changes, it can really make things less painful.
 - open presents Christmas Eve instead of Christmas Day.
 - have dinner at a different time or different place.
 - attend a different church for Christmas service.
 - let children take over decorating the tree, or get a different kind of tree.
3. Your greatest comfort may come in doing something meaningful for others. There are so many ways, but here are a few:
 - giving a gift in memory of our loved one.
 - donating the money we would have spent on our loved one to a particular charity.
 - adopting a needy family for the holidays.

• planning a get together with another grieving family.

4. Whether it's putting up the tree, preparing greeting cards, holiday baking or a big family dinner, ask yourself these questions before making any decisions:

- do I really enjoy doing this? Do other family members really enjoy this?
- is this a task that can be shared by other family members?
- would Christmas be Christmas without it?

5. Other ideas include:

- burning a special candle (green) in memory of the family member, or each day throughout the season.
- buying a poinsettia or other plant as a living memorial.
- putting thoughts and feelings about our loved one on notes and placing them in a special stocking, or fill with candy and pass around to be shared.
- bring tree branches or other decorations and put on their grave.
- look through photo albums, slides, home movies together as a family, remembering the good times together.

These holidays will be observed whether we choose to or not. I wish you peace.



Grief Grafts

Because I have to write the newsletter in advance, I receive so many inspiring letters after the newsletter is completed. These are a few I received last year:

Frankie, the 21-year-old son of Bob and Roxie Carrothers, was killed in an automobile accident, 7-4-93. Roxie shared:

*This has been a growing year for me. I joined **Compassionate Friends** and am now helping on our monthly newsletter.*

I will burn a green candle. This is our third Christmas without Frankie. I don't know if it is any easier, but I know it feels so good to find ways to keep him included in all we do.



Frankie's symbols are the wind and a rosary



Paula Hardin's 19-year-old son, Jeremy, died 9-5-94, as the result of injuries he sustained from falling from a bridge. Paula sent this greeting and voiced all of our feelings:

Holiday Blessings to all, and the wish for happy memories of your child at Christmas. Jeremy is very much alive in our hearts at Christmas, but I do. I find that it has become a more private sharing of memories as the year has passed. So many folks assume I am "over it." They are blessed in their ignorance for you know like I do that we just miss them more and more. Acceptance and longing are independent of the other.

Jeremy's symbols are a twinkling star and drama masks



Becky, the 19-year-old daughter of Lewell and Helen Oakes died 6-11-93 when the car she was in was hit by a drunk driver. Helen lamented:

These days are so hard. Everyone tells me I need to think of my other 2 daughters and grandchildren; that life goes on and that I must let go of Becky.

I realize life goes on, hut I cannot let go of Becky!

I'm trying very hard for my children, but so many people just don't understand. The ones that say these things to me haven't lost a child, and I pray they never do. Just when I think I'm doing okay, I fall again.

We have a candle burning for all the children in Heaven.

A horse, an angel and a pink rose are Becky's symbols.



Allen Titlow, the 29-year-old son of Anne Meroney, died from an accidental overdose, 3-7-92. Anne has a wonderful tradition:

*Your suggestion that we bum a green candle is a good one. The candle I burn is white, for purity of the spirit. Each December since Allen's death, I have attended the annual memorial service given by one of the **Compassionate Friends** chapters here in Atlanta. At the service, we all line up and light our candles from one big candle, and name our children. I bum the candle on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Allen's birthday, and other special occasions throughout the year. It is a good reminder that we'll always love him, and that he is still with us in spirit.*



Allen's symbol is a buck.

Luciana, the 15-year-old daughter of Lucia and Skip Bayne, was accidentally shot 4-30-94. The following article was written by Juliana Martin, **Remembering her angel at Christmas:**

Inside one Mint Hill home, past a cabinet decorated with all sorts of angel, bums a single green candle.

The burning wick atop the green candle on the mantle represents a past loved one. In this case, it represents Lucia and Skip Bayne's teenage daughter, Luciana.

In May of 1994, she was accidentally shot and killed. Now, with a second Christmas without her on the way, the family fondly remembers her.

"People think that we don't want to talk about Luciana because she's gone, but it's just the opposite. I want to talk about her, so that I don't forget. All the mothers I've talked to that have lost a child agree. We don't want people to change the subject. And, we don't want to forget our children," said Lucia Bayne.

According to Jerry Jonas, the leader of the Christian support group "Foot prints," 1,000 children under the age of 35 have died in the last three years in the Charlotte area. "Children dying has become an epidemic," said Jonas who has become a friend to Bayne.

Throughout the Bayne home are pictures of Luciana, her Bible, home videos and lots of angels. "That's how I explained it to Michael and Melissa. I told them that Luciana had become an angel," said Bayne when referring to how she explained her daughter's death to her two young children.

"Right after her death, I was walking in a mall and I was looking for books on grief, hut I was attracted to books about angels. Soon after her husband bought her an angel. Now, thanks to friends, she has a house swelling with them.

As far as burning a green candle, Bayne was urged to do so from a fellow traveler.

Bayne has opened an angel shop. "I needed to turn the tragedy into good," said Bayne. The shop called "Luciana's Angels" features Christian books, figurines, pictures, lapel pins, ornaments, note cards, sun catchers, etc. "I opened the shop with the intention of ministering to other mothers who have gone through the same thing," explained Bayne.

Last month Bayne and her husband went on a retreat in the mountains. "I still had doubt (about God) even though I knew I shouldn't have. So, when I was in the mountains, I prayed for the Lord to show me a shooting star as a sign. I hadn't seen one since I lived in Brazil. The next night while with my husband, one shot across the sky." she said in amazement. "I will never doubt again."

Luciana's symbols are angels.



David and Cindy Jo Greever's 9-year-old daughter, Michelle, died 11-5-93. Cindy Jo wrote a letter to Michelle:

*An Open Letter to Our Youngest Daughter, Michelle Marie:
8/24/84 --1115/93*

Dear Michelle,

It is so hard to believe that three years have gone by since you went to Heaven. To think that you are now twelve years old is so difficult because I guess I will always remember you as nine, the age you were when you were killed attempting to get to your school bus.

But your legacy remains and will forever, as a most loving and compassionate dear daughter and friend to all. You had so much wisdom and compassion for one so young. You brightened my every day and still do as I reflect on your sweet and unconditional love... You were always there to help and to intercede, no matter what the situation, and it was always for the best. I miss your beautiful art work, your beautiful angelic voice and solos. playing your keyboard for me and all your creations. I miss us gazing deeply and happily into one another's eyes, but most of all, I miss YOU!!!

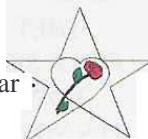
As the Holidays approach, I wish you the Merriest Christmas and know that as we celebrate Jesus' birth, you are literally with Him!! And as we reflect on Jesus' gift of life to us, I reflect also on the gifts of life you gave to others through being an organ donor. It always was your style to "give" rather than to receive...

I will always hold you dear in my heart, my sweet Angel, until we meet for all eternity in Paradise.

*Now and forever. lovingly,
Your mother, family and friend.*

Cindy Jo sends greetings to all: *I have been busy with Awanas, Bible study, my own newsletter as well as co-editing for the National Kidney Foundation's newsletter. So I am keeping afloat, thanks be to friends like you!! Take care and much love to you this Holiday season and always!!*

Michelle's symbols are a star with a heart and a flower.



Scott, the 18-year-old son of Curtis and Pat Livingston, was killed in an automobile accident, 10-14-93. Each letter received makes me realize that so many of our children are so much alike, Pat writes:

Scott wanted to learn to ride a horse. I hope Young Jim is teaching him how to, that is if he could keep from laughing at him. Scott was such a cut-up.

The following poem was written by Scott's 12th grade English teacher which he read at Scott's funeral and was published in the year book. This poem was cross-stitched for me and hangs in my home:

In Memory of Scott Livingston

*Suddenly he was not here.
Our hearts did throb and ache.
Surely he's not gone for good,
It must be a mistake.*

*How one so full of life should go
And simply cease to be
Was hard for us to understand, Indeed
we could not see!*

*Now we long for voice so fond,
For vanished smiles we long.
Yet, God has taken Scott on,
And He cannot be wrong.*

*In a place of glorious splendor
God prepared for His own,
Scott, no doubt, is playing baseball
Before the Great White Throne.*

*Now there's so much we cannot see ,
Our eyesight's rather dim,
But come what may, we'll simply trust
In God, we can go to Him.*

Scott's symbol is a baseball.



Frank and Susan Van Vleck's 19-year-old son, Marc, was killed by a drunk driver 7-18-92. Susan describes Marc:

I am proud and honored to have been Marc's mother even for just nineteen years. Even with the loss and pain I feel, I would not trade the time we had together. I am grateful to have known and loved Marc.

Marc was born in Topeka, Kansas, May 21, 1973. We lived in Topeka until our move to Marietta, Georgia in

June 1989. Marc was a handsome young man with blond hair and blue eyes. He had a smile that lit up a room and dimples that made my heart melt. Marc loved people and he loved life! He was involved in many activities, but always had time to listen and to help his friends. He was a compassionate and caring young man. Marc set goals for himself and worked diligently to attain them.

Some of his activities/accomplishments: performed in school plays, wrote for the school newspaper, played trumpet in band, graduated in the top 6% of his high school class, he lettered in debate and music, participated in the Georgia Governor's Honor Program, member of SADD, Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities, and the list goes on.

Marc had just finished his freshman year at Georgia Tech. He had been on the Dean's list all three quarters, played trumpet in the marching band, worked part-time with campus police, joined Phi Kappa Theta Fraternity, took Navy ROTC, all while carrying a full load of classes. He lived in a dorm that school year and was living at home for the summer with plans to return to GT in the fall. Marc was killed by a drunk driver (BAC .24) within a mile of our home. Marc was taking a friend home after a night of miniature golf and movies.

*Marc had a wonderful sense of humor and loved to tease me. Grief work is the hardest work I have ever done in my life. I have seen counselors, attended MADD support meetings, **Compassionate Friends** and journaled my feelings in several notebooks to "drain the pain." Marc was not just my son, but my friend. I love him so much and miss him everyday.*

Marc wrote for the school newspaper in Junior High and High school. In the 8th grade, he had his own column entitled, Dr. Van's Couch. He wrote this column:

GIFT GIVING

When Christmas is near, many people look for the perfect gift to give to a relative or Friend. Why are gifts given? For many reasons. Some are listed below.

1. To strengthen a relationship.

2. To remove one's guilt. Usually, the more guilt the higher the price of the gift. People will pay a lot of money to remove guilt. Really you can't remove guilt this way. Go to the person and apologize for what you did. You may never completely remove the guilt by trying to buy away a guilty conscience.

3. To show your love for someone else.

4. The giver feels good.

So remember try to stay away from reason No.2 and give gifts for any of the other reasons. The best gift you can give is to give your time to other people. Write to your grandparents. Spend time with your family. Bake cookies for your neighbors. "Love isn't love until it is given away!"

Dr. Van

PS Santa Claus, I want a scholarship from Harvard Law School for Christmas.

I do not know a symbol that Marc used, but his favorite quote was:

LIFE IS AN ADVENIURE TO BE LIVED, NOT A PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED.

Johnathan Stone, the 16-year-old son of Rick and Claire Brown, was accidentally shot 12-16-95. Claire described Johnathan's first birthday since his death:

We have gone through Johnathan's first birthday without him. He would have been 17 on October 15th. We knew it was going to be hard, but we never dreamed just how hard! His grave looked like a brand new one! There were so many flowers, notes and balloons. Kids were out there off and on all day long. What a wonderful tribute to my Johnathan!

We are coming closer to our one year anniversary of Johnathan's death. I'd love suggestions from any of my fellow travelers who have already been through this painful time on just how you manage it! I have no clue, and my heart actually aches.

Johnathan made our holidays so special. He loved all holidays. He was just like me, a big snoop! I had to hide things in different places every day. Even though we didn't have Johnathan

last Christmas, we were all still in shock and just going through the motions, so it seems like this is our first Christmas without Johnathan.

I did something last year on his 16th birthday that I've never done in the past! I did NOT take one single picture of him! I always take pictures of my kids year round and especially on their birthdays. I never even realized I had not until he was gone.

My thoughts and prayers are with each of you this holiday season. To all the parents and the brothers and sisters of our lost precious children, may God and His mercy be with you now and always.

Johnathan's symbol is a soccer ball and teddy bear.



Michael, the 23-year-old son of Dick and Jean Sand, was killed in an automobile accident 6-18-94. Jean wrote this letter to Michael:

TO MY SPECIAL ANGEL

My precious Michael, I was very proud to be your mother as you were my everything. Michael, you were one of the best things that ever happened to Dad and myself. You were a little miracle in disguise as we were told there would be no more SAND in our lives. Your mom, me, thought she had the flu, but instead, it turned out to be a miracle and it was you. What a wonderful, whimsical surprise. You were witty, you were charming and you could not be denied. You were so full of life that you made our hearts smile. You had a million dollar smile and a million and one friends.

Michael, you loved the great outdoors, fishing, hunting, cars and trucks, but most of all, you were a family kind of guy. We were all special to you. You must know your loss is surely Heaven's gain.

I still feel lots of numbness and I still cry a lot of rivers over you and I hear your voice every time I breath. You were one of the most perfect and precious gifts the Lord could ever give to us and we did cherish that gift. We hope you are happy and healthy and things are better where you are than you could have ever thought. We know you are looking down on us, helping us,

guiding us and praying for us and we could not ask for anything more, other than we thought you would be here with us forever and ever.

Maybe our loss is your gain. God bless you and keep you ever at his side and ill His fold.

Love,
Your Mom



Michael's symbols are a star, an angel, a Stetson hat and boots.

G.B. and Carolyn Bowman's three children, Ashley (9), Courtney (14), and Daniel (17) died from an automobile accident, 6-24-96. Courtney's basketball coach wrote the following poem:

WINGS

IT BROKE MY HEART WHEN I
HEARD THE NEWS,
COURTNEY IS GONE, ASHLEY AND
DANIEL TOO.

IT HAPPENED SO QUICKLY, THEN
THEY WERE GONE,
BUT IN OUR HEARTS ALL THREE
LIVE ON.

COURTNEY OR "QUARTER" YOU
PICK THE NAME,
BUT THERE'S NO DOUBT, BASKET
BALL WAS HER GAME.
SHE WAS A STAR, THE BEST SHE
COULD BE,
DRIVE FOR A LAY UP OR SHOOT
A "THREE."

ASHLEY WAS GOING TO BE A
STAR TOO,
LEFT-HANDED WITH AN
ATTITUDE.

I CAN SEE HER NOW, BALL IN
HER HANDS,
I WAS ONE OF HER BIGGEST
FANS.

DANIEL, THE OLDEST. HE WAS A
FINE LAD,
THE SPITTING IMAGE OF HIS
DAD,
HE PLAYED BALL, BUT JUST FOR
FUN,
HE WAS HIS PARENTS ONLY SON.

THEY ARE IN HEAVEN WITH OUR
KING,
THEY TRADED THEIR UNIFORMS
FOR A SET OF WINGS.

NOW GOD IS THEIR COACH, BUT
IT'S NOT THE SAME,

IT'S ABOUT LOVE. IT'S NOT A GAME.

FRIENDS AND FAMILY, PLEASE DON'T CRY.

OUR BODIES ARE GONE, BUT WE DIDN'T DIE.

WE'LL COME AND MEET YOU AT THE GOLDEN GATE, IN THE LAND OF LOVE, NO TEARS, NO HATE.

NOW MOM AND DAD, WE MUST SAY GOOD-BYE,

OUR HOME IS NOW ABOVE THE SKY.

BUT DON'T WORRY, THE BIRDS WILL SING,

AND ONE DAY YOU'LL EARN YOUR OWN SET OF WINGS!

--Coach Richard Jones

The children's symbols are angels.



Kim, the 27-year old daughter of Jerry Stricker and Nona Stricker, took her own life, 10-27-94. Nona is very involved in suicide prevention. Nona was in New York on the 26th of October for the 100th anniversary gala of the Columbia University Medical School (Psychiatry Department). She states, "They are doing the cutting edge research there on suicide prevention. I visited the department in the summer of '95 and they keep in touch with me regularly. For the survivors of suicide, it's helpful to know that something is being done."



Kim's symbol is an angel.

Ernest and Rebecca Goode's 32-year-old son, Jeff, died from kidney failure, 3-24-95. Rebecca is quite a woman. She shares her journey with cancer:

I finished my treatments sometime ago; had been having trouble holding my upper torso up (weak bones in rib cage and spine) so they started me on the new bone builder medication which has been on the market about three

months. They said it was a boon for bone cancer victims; it has helped me. I take it via the vein; must sit 2 1/2 hours for it. It does nothing to stop the cancer in the marrow, however. At present my cancer cells are low. I realize (it's with me all the time) that I have a terminal illness.

While we were in South Bend, we got to see the Community Center dedicated to our son, Jeff It is called "Goodies" Thrift & Gift Shop. It's large and has 3700 square feet. We also brought back a tape Jeff had made which he dedicated to me. Jeff knew that I loved "Hello Darling" by Conway Twitty. So much work has gone into the Community Center and still is. This was Jeff's request and all of his friends are determined to see it through.

Jeff was very talented in music. His symbols are a rainbow and musical notes.



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 CODA. Janet explains why she works with CODA:

Working with CODA and my friends have saved my life. The specific enabling of my grief work by being able to talk about my loss, has allowed me a privilege most who grieve don't receive.

I don't feel the frustration from Marc's prematurely shortened life as many do because, even in death, he has made a difference, just like Young Jim.

Jason and I made a video for KODA's (Kentucky Organ Donation Association) high school program. We filmed it in late August and I was so proud of Jason (Marc's brother) for his candor and presence with this painful subject. The interviewer asked both of us who Marc was and Jason's answer says it all. He said, "Marc was my best friend."

We had the last of civil procedures in October-it will probably go to trial, but we will get past this, learn something from it and continue to live good, whole lives in honor of Marc.

Mary, the 15-year-old daughter of Woody and Jenny Curtis, died from a heart attack, 6-21-93. Last January I told you about Ash Lee that has the same condition as Mary and she was having surgery. I am happy to report that Ash Lee had her surgery in October and she is doing well.

Mary's symbols are a heart, star, sunshine and a cheerleader.



Gary and Viola Correll's son, Michael (15), was killed in an electrical shock-drowning 8-9-95. One of Michael's many friends, Sharon King, expressed how she felt about Michael:

Precious Moments

If you will sit and think gently for a moment. Think of a friend who struggled because you struggled. A friend who cried because you cried and laughed because you smiled. The very person who loved you since the beginning and shared his whole life with you. Now, sorrowfully, imagine his death. Imagine your life without ever seeing his smile. Is it possible to imagine your life without him? Are you able to feel the anguish, grief, and pain piercing your heart as you imagine that he has gone forever?

On August 9, 1995, I lost an extraordinary friend who was the center focus of my heart. He was a friend that I could count on for support and comfort. When I felt as if my life was a waste of the Lord's time, he would lift my soul from the bottomless pits of sand and float it on the cool breeze of the wind. His comfort was not talk about how special I was. His comfort was his smile, the flash of light gleaming from his eyes, or the simple way his embrace warmed my heart. His sensitivity meant so much, more than words. His very presence illuminated me.

I still contemplate to myself, "Why?" "Why Michael, the person I anticipated would never die?" I only wish that I could behold him again. If I could have the opportunity to tell him how he made me feel free and needed, I could

leave him behind and smile again. Every step he walked behind me made a memory I could never leave behind. It shatters my hopes and weakens my soul to know that, honestly, I never rendered him a clue to how unique he made me feel.

In comfort, I wrote two poems expressing my friendship and grief. The poems have encouraged me to realize that I should reveal my true emotions no matter what may occur.

Please, think for a moment of thoughts and feelings you never expressed. Think for a moment, because you may never have the chance again!

Looking Deep Within ME

Look deep into my eyes and tell me what you see,

A bed full of roses, and a stream that leads to me.

You look along the bank, where rain drops seem to fall.

Thoughts of all your pain, it is my name you call.

Look deep into my heart, and tell me what you see,

A river of emotions, my true identity. You stand within the center, here you will remain.

Here, there is no hatred. Here, there is no pain.

Look deep within my soul, and tell me what you see.

An ocean of feelings and all eternity. You lie within my soul, you control my storm,

Your touch still gentle, Your love still warm.

To See You Again

I sit in a room filled with sorrow,
Happy to have known you, sad to see
you go.

Memories of your smile stay, your sins
you left behind.

It is you I search for, it is you I'll never
find.

Forever I'll love you, today I will cry.
Deep within mother earth, in peace
you lie.

Your heart was so strong, your
memory I'll amend.
In hope that someday I'll see you again.
Over the vast green, towards the sea,

I hear your voice, silently. Touches of
mist collected from the wind, Remind
me of the softness in your skin.

Remember me as I have you. As I wake
to early morning dew.

As night falls, and the day begins. All
for hope that I'll see you again.

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



Matt, the 12-year-old son of Gene and Ruby Hansen, was accidentally shot, 11-30-91. Because of this tragic accident, the family has written a pamphlet entitled "A Family's Tragedy Prompts Firearm Safety." It is an excellent pamphlet that every adult and child should read. I hope you will. You may write for the pamphlet

Gene and Ruby Hansen
1474 Valley View Drive Coralville, IA
52241

Ruby explains the "reinvestment"
they have made.

Since my child's death, I found
compassion growing in me, I found
myself to be more flexible, and much
stronger because of life's tragedies. I
will not, nor can I, forget the valuable
and powerful influence my child's life
and death has meant to me. I've voyaged
a road in which I've acquired wisdom,
intelligence, attained by love, not merely
words. My child's preciousness will de-
termine how I live the rest of my days.

I have learned to savor life more, and,
love more deeply, thus honoring my
child by the way I live. My child's life
and death are all a part of who I am to-
day. With this in mind, I have loved
more profoundly, and have expanded
my awareness and knowledge.

I had to give reason to this over-
whelming pain, a focus, a direction. I
needed my child to be more than just a
statistic. I have learned to integrate my
child into my life and memory. Only I
can build into my life a memorial for my
child, a channel for my sorrow.

There comes a time when we must pick

up the pieces of our fragmented lives,
and obligate ourselves to something
larger than our grief our love for our
child. When we allow ourselves to be
truly inspired, we can do remarkable
things. I believe this to be true, because
it's not us, it's our child motivating us.

We cannot choose what happens to
us, but we can choose our attitude, and
how our lives will change. I think when
we reinvest our child into our lives, we
heal more quickly. We can reinvest our
child into our lives by becoming a better
person, a more caring individual, by
changing laws and regulations, by
starting a crusade. We each have grown
through the process of loving and losing
our child. Our child did not die in vain,
for we have grown and changed. None
of us volunteered our child to death, but
still it happened. I need to affirm the
value of his life. Reinvestment doesn't
mean we're over our grief it means we
have found new ways to keep them in
the forefront of our mind. All that was
ever ours (children) are ours forever.
I've only reached another milestone on
this journey of grief I've allowed the joy
of Matthew to start to subside the
agony, pain, and the hurt that had
paralyzed me since his death, and
beautiful memories are returning.

Reinvesting our child's influence in
our being and character is a marvelous
way of honoring them. I can adore my
child by living and loving, because
Matthew taught me much about love,
unconditional love. Each of us in our
own way has already begun reinvesting
our children into our lives. How pre-
cious our children were, and-forever
will be.



Matt's symbols are deer (buck),
pheasant, and fish.



Cecil and Jolene Hutchinson lost their
only child, Anne Haake (28) and their
grandson, Paxston (5 weeks old), in an
automobile accident, 6-27-96. Jolene
laments:

On June 27, 1996, our sweet daugh-
ter, Anne Hutchinson Haake and her
beautiful 5-week-old son, Paxston Scott,
were killed in an automobile accident.
Anne was 28 years old. Anne

was our only child. Even though we are hurt deeply, we still have so much to be thankful for and are able to praise God for His goodness. Anne's other son, 3 year old Parker, and a great niece of mine, Melina Anne Hensley, survived the crash. My daughter had done everything right that afternoon as both of her sons were strapped in their car seats and she and Melina were in their seat belts and Anne's car had air bags which deployed. The truck which Anne hit had no seat belts in use that evening and the worse injury of the three people in the truck, was a broken arm.

Anne's Dad and I did not see the car, however, our son-in-law and many of our friend., and family members did. We have been told that it was a miracle that Parker and Melina survived. Parker only had broken teeth and a burn on his forehead from the air bag and Melina had to spend four days in the hospital as she had lacerations on the spleen along with bruising.

On Sunday, June 23, Anne and I had spent about 8 hours together as we had driven to Knoxville to meet my sister and her husband who had brought Melina from Asheville to meet us so that Melina could spend a few days with Anne and her family. On that day, Anne told me how lucky she was that her husband, Jeff, loved her and the boys so much and how hard he worked so that she could stay at home and take care of the little ones. Also, she told me that she was so happy with her life, and how some of her friends were unhappy in their marriages and how friends told her that they were almost envious of her and her life as she was so happy and loved. Anne told me that afternoon how she was so satisfied with her life.

In January of 1995, Anne had started a home based business with her husband as independent distributors for ENRICH INTERNATIONAL (an herbal company) She told me that even if she did not make any money from selling the herbs, that it would be okay with her as she knew that she would be helping other people live happier and healthier lives.

Anne was the youngest grandchild in my family, (there were 10) and she was the only redhead and loved my

family. All of us have been so grieved. (I have two sisters and a brother and my Mother is still here. My Dad died two years ago) Anne was just a happy girl. She was only 4'11-1/2" (And Mom, don't forget the half) with pretty red hair and a great smile for everyone. She was energetic and bubbly, and oh, so proud of her two beautiful sons. Anne never liked to be alone, so God in his plan, sent little Paxston so that she could take him with her to heaven and she did not have to go alone.



Paxston's symbol is a teddy bear, and Anne's symbol, are a "Mother and child" and collie.



James, the 17-year-old son of Raymond and Birdellia Patrick, was killed in an auto accident 4-16-93. Birdellia keeps in touch:

I am still working and that takes up a lot of my time, but I still think about you all. We've moved, and our new address is: 79 Dogwood Lane, Stanton, KY 40380.

We are doing pretty well, but we still miss James so much. It has been four years that he has been gone. It's a little easier but the pain and hurt are still there. I don't think it will ever go away. I still get that longing to see him and hold him just to hear him say "My beautiful little Mom," even though, I'm not so little.

James' symbols are a heart and a clown.



Janna, the 12-year-old daughter of David and Peggy Webb, died from a brain hemorrhage 7-12-93. Peggy voiced how I feel about each of you, even though I haven't met many of you:

I don't know you, have never met you, but in so many ways, you seem more a friend to me than my own dear friends, who try as they might, will never understand the valley I travel. I pray God that they never do, and I thank Him for people like all of you who, despite your own sorrow, let me know that I am not alone.

I know that none of us is happy about the circumstances that brought us together, but the community of grievors need to hear the message of hope for a useful, even joyous future.



Janna's symbols are yellow butterflies and a rainbow.

Mildred Hodson's daughter, Lydia Copeland, died from complications from treatment of Hodgkin's disease 10-28-91. Mildred compiled pictures and some of Lydia's poems into a treasured booklet and dedicated it to her grandson, Ashton.

Lydia wrote this poem Christmas, 1969:

Diamonds

Diamonds

Diamonds-- see them round us falling, gliding down through all that nothing. . .

Did we think it would really happen, fortunes we tread upon.

Oh! not diamonds? then, I beseech you, tell me what these fine gems are...

Standing here beneath the bright lamp in the dark night light I wait.

What? Snowflakes! Ah me! I thought them jewels.

But, what a joy for one brief moment, After all, who steps on diamonds?

Mildred wrote this tribute:

Lydia's unconditional kindness and thoughtfulness, the forgiving spirit, the bright enthusiasm was ever present. She was unselfish and gracious, to the extent that she always placed others' welfare ahead of her own. Her unflinching faith, serenity, and hope was a constant inspiration. With love so Feely shared, she showered all of us with a desire to live better lives, to meet the high expectations she desired for us.

She created a radiance for us. During her 37 years, Lydia was always with me--in love. She was the person I looked up to-- strong, yet gentle, sensitive and my constant protector. Lydia was my precious child, a loving daughter, my loyal friend.

A treasured gift she made was a cassette, a vocal medley of her favorite songs. One of the songs she sang was "Did I fill the World With Love?" and indeed she did. For those of us who truly loved her, no one will ever take her place. Her absence has created an emptiness that will not go away.

The music of her voice and the song of her life will forever and ever be in my heart.



I love you forever; my Lydia,
Mama

Lydia's symbol is an angel.

Martha Ridenour's 38-year-old daughter, Suzanne, died from aspiration, 9-20-94. Martha shares:

I have enclosed a memorial that friends of Suzanne put in the paper. It is nice to know that others still remember her. As you have said, we all want our loved children remembered.

**In Memory of Suzanne Ridenour
Sept. 4, 1956 - Sept. 20, 1994**

There is comfort in the knowledge that if we never cease to love those we lose, we never lose those we love. To live in hearts we love is not to die.

Ballet slippers are Suzanne's symbol.



Will Duffy, the 16-year-old son of Sue Anne, was killed in an automobile accident, 1-23-94. Sue Anne tells us about Will:

Will was 16 years old and had just gotten a car. He was able to drive his friends to school and he seemed so happy.

January 12, 1994, he and three friends were on their way to a movie. Another 16-year-old ran a red light and caused our son's death. No one else in the car was even hurt, and Will would have wanted it that way. He was such a loving, caring child.

My husband and I have five other beautiful children and they miss him terribly! He was our baby and still was home with us. The others are older and are married; some with children.

We are blessed to have our remaining children and grandchildren, but no

one will ever take his place in our hearts.

He was a baseball pitcher on his high school team and a wonderful artist. He had just begun guitar lessons and he and his dad would sing together. He was such a wonderful child and we all miss him very much.

Your Jim and our Will shared a lot of similarities. They were both fun loving, loved life and their friends and family but were serious when it was called for. I think they would have liked one another very much!

I haven't selected a symbol yet, because he had so many interests. He loved music, pitched baseball and was a member of the school golf team. He was playing basketball for a church team at the time of his accident. His English teacher had her students keep journals. What a wonderful gift it has been to us to be able to read and reread his words. But most of all of his talents, he was a gifted artist. We are so proud of the sketches and one watercolor we have.



We were all certainly blessed to have him for sixteen years, but somehow, it is difficult to imagine the rest of our lives without him.

Pam and Hubert Meade's son, Quentin, died from cancer, 8-8-93. Pam wrote the following poem:

A Golden Love

Once in a lifetime
One may get to shore
Such a love I once knew
And still do.

A young man with
Golden sunshine in his hair
And a smile for everyone
Who knew him too.

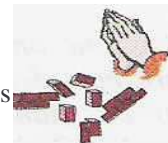
Life not measured
By the length of his days
But by the light
He let shine while on his way.

To everyone he touched
Giving much cheer
Being so mature
For only thirteen years.

Now Quentin has moved on
To a better and golden shore
But the sunshine, his laughter and love
Will live on forevermore.

Quentin's symbols are

Lego's and praying hands



Marcia Carson's 21-year-old son, Dell, was murdered 12-15-91. Marcia wrote this poem about Jihad last Christmas:

IN MEMORIAL

Jarvis Lyden (Jihad) Carson
12-22-69/12-15-91

Early this morning with snow all
around

Icicles hung from the roof to the ground
I saw a blue jay perched in the tree
Strutting and singing, just for me.

The sky was blue, the ground was white
But something in this picture was not
right.

The tree was trimmed, the hall was
decked

All of my shopping was just about met.
The turkey was thawing, the ham was
too

Then I knew, another Christmas to get
through.

Your favorite holiday, your birthday,
and death too.

How can we have Christmas without
you?

Just like the Baby who was born during
a storm

It also was storming when I first held
you in my arms.

I watch the stars for the bright one
twinkling through

That is the one I know is you.

Your time of the year, Why am I sad? I
have your memories, I should be glad.
You always managed throughout Xmas
night

To grab every candy cane that was in
sight.

You never admitted throughout Xmas
day,

But the peppermint scent always gave
you away.

I will go to your grave and trim the
trees

With candy canes galore as much as
you please.

I know you won't mind that the deer
will eat them all.

They're beautiful deer standing straight
and tall.

I will make sure your daughter is not
sad for the season

*You, my dear son, just gave me a reason
To acknowledge the blue jay singing in the trees
To feed the deer as much as I please. To trim the tree and deck the hall,
To sing and dance, enjoy it all.
I'd still rather you were here
To be with us sharing our cheer.
Another year as bad as the last,
But this year too will soon pass
With unconditional/undying love.*

Your Mom,
Marcia Carson



Dell's symbols are boxing gloves and a unicorn.

Barry (21), the only child of Doris Gulley, was killed when a wall fell on him, 6-27-95. Doris wrote:

Barry had just had his 21st birthday a few weeks before his accident. He had really looked forward to this birthday. He had finished his third year at college. (He had been attending the University of North Alabama) He had moved out into his own apartment in March of '94. He had worked the same part-time job since he graduated from high school. He and his best friend Jason Latham (died in auto accident 3-13-95) were planning on attending the University of Kentucky in the fall. Barry was going to be an electrical engineer. He had decided that when he was in the 11th grade and had not changed his mind. The University here (Alabama) does not have an engineering department, so that was the reason for going to Kentucky.

He had decided to change jobs for the summer because he could work fulltime before school started. He had worked very hard in order to be able to go to college.

*Barry had always seemed more mature than most kids his age. He was our only child.. I worried when he first told me he was changing jobs, especially when I heard the word "construction." (You naturally think **DANGER**, but that's what he wanted to do. He had already worked two summers with a contractor building houses. He loved that kind of work. I had surgery on my arm the 1st of May and Barry had really been concerned about me. He*

had even driven me to the doctor to have my stitches removed, came to the house and cut the grass, and anything else I needed help with.

He had been in the car with Jason, the night of Jason's accident, just minutes earlier. Jason had just taken Barry home, so that meant he was the last one to talk to Jason. Barry was really a changed person in a lot of ways after Jason was killed. He started looking at a lot of things differently. He thought of Jason as the brother he never had. Where you saw one of them, you usually saw the other.



Barry was my "angel."

Brandon Sparks, the 16-year-old son of Donna Isaacs, was killed in an automobile accident Donna explains her new hobby:

It is terrible to be a mother and her child is gone. I long to see Brandon's face, to hold him in my arms, to tell him again and again how much I love him.

I've started doing something this year that I never thought I'd ever do because I never had the desire until now. Brandon had just started deer hunting. He had only gone two seasons and he truly loved it. So I thought I'd try it in memory of my son and I also love it... Sitting there in the peace and quiet and thanking God for the beauty of his forest and of everything that he has given me and the assurance that I will be with my son sometime soon.

I know that if we could, we would have stopped the death of our sons. I'm doing some better, but I do have my days as I'm sure you do. It's comforting to know we are not in a world by ourselves.

Brandon's symbols are a baseball and fishing



Jaci, the 11-year-old daughter of Joe and Gail Friedmann, died as the result of being hit by a school bus while she was riding her bicycle, 6-8-95. In the October issue of **Good Housekeeping**, Gail was featured in the story entitled: **my problem and How I Solved It, Saying**

Good-bye to Jaci. The article is by Gail as told to Sondra Forsyth. Part of the article follows:

I was surprised by the large turnout. One hundred and sixty-nine children from our town's elementary school had ridden their bikes to the high school for the First Annual Jaci Friedmann Memorial Bicycle Rodeo.

But what amazed me even more was that my voice didn't break when I held up my daughter's bicycle helmet and addressed the crowd. "Like a lot of girls who are eleven going on seventeen, Jaci didn't think it was cool to wear her helmet because it messed up her hair and made her look dumb," I told the kids and their parents. "Now I don't have Jaci. All I have is her helmet."

When Jaci died, I wanted to die too. The pain was so intense I felt like my heart would pop out of my chest.

In a way, it was a relief to plan Jaci's funeral because it was something to do. Somehow, it made me feel like I was still Jaci's mom, picking out what I knew was her favorite outfit, choosing the Bible verses, music, and flowers she would have wanted.

After the funeral, all I could do was cry, until my whole face would ache and my eyes stung. Deep down, I was afraid the tears would never stop.

To make matters, worse, Joe and I couldn't even comfort each other. I came to realize that each person goes on the journey of grief alone, especially in the beginning. My way of finding comfort was to look at photos of Jaci, read the poems she'd written in school, and sit in her room and remember her hugs and laughter. But it tore Joe up to even think about his "princess." For him, getting back to his job in engineering was vital. There, at the office, he could pull himself together.

In the evenings, we'd end up in separate rooms, sobbing. Mike (their son) would go from one room to another, trying to act goofy and make us laugh. Eventually he'd give up and find excuses to spend more time at his cousin's house.

Weeks passed. I remember floating on a raft in our pool one day, when everyone else was out. All I could think

about was that if Jaci had stayed in the house like I told her to, she'd be in the pool with me, splashing, giggling, and practicing her backstroke. Then again, if I hadn't left the kids alone, she wouldn't have had the opportunity to disobey me. The anger, guilt, and terrible sense of loss hit me all at once. I looked over the edge of the raft and thought how easy and peaceful it would be to roll off go underwater, and never come up.

I clutched the raft, terrified that such a thought could have crossed my mind. I have a wonderful husband who doesn't deserve to be a widower, I told myself I lost my daughter, but I need to figure out how to get on with my life and be a good wife for Joe, a good mother for Mike.

When Joe came home, I talked to him about joining a support group for grieving parents. He was all for it. A week later, we were listening to other people tell their stories. At first, those stories made us feel bad. But by the next morning, the benefits of the session began to take effect. I realized that those parents didn't talk just about tragedy. They talked about hope. Some of them were a lot further along than Joe and I, and could reassure us that we would get through this.

By the end of the summer, we were beginning to feel like a family again. But Joe and I dreaded the holidays. The thought of spending Christmas at home and not seeing our little girl come running down the stairs to open her presents seemed impossible. That's why we decided to spend Christmas Eve in Nashville at the Grand Ole Opry, a place that held no memories of Jaci.

In March, when the weather warmed up and the neighborhood kids started getting out their bicycles, I had an idea. For months, I had been looking for some way to honor Jaci's memory. I'd read about a bicycle safety practice course for the kids.

The day of the event, May 4, Mike was our gofer, making sure everything was in place. I was thrilled to see my family pulling together for something that had come to mean so much to us. Then the kids began showing up in droves. In addition to the safety course, there was a magic show and a

drawing for prizes, including helmets and bike flags. And I made my speech.

After a write-up in the paper about what a success our bike rodeo had been, I received a call from someone in a neighboring town asking for help in organizing a similar event. It was a great moment for us. That night, after almost a year, I finally heard Joe's wonderful belly laugh.

Our lives can never be the same, of course. Mike and Jaci were close, and I know he still misses her. Everywhere we turn, there's a space where Jaci used to be. Sometimes when Joe and I are sharing a happy moment, the grief pushes through and stops us. We almost feel guilty for having a good time.

Surviving the death of a cherished child has been a monumental challenge for my family, but we are all healing. For me, the surest sign that I'm beginning to find peace is that I no longer flinch when a stranger asks whether I have children. I respond right away: "Yes. Three on Earth and one in Heaven."

Gail has been contacted by the United States Safety Commission. They want her to help them promote a program that they're starting, to promote helmet use and hopefully go onto federal regulation of a mandatory helmet law.

Gail writes: *Pray for me. If it is God's will, I will be so honored to be a part of such a program. I miss my beloved Jaclyn so very much and this still gives me a relationship with her.*

Mickey Mouse is Jaci's symbol.



Bob and Martha Durbin's 15-year-old daughter, Sherry, died 11-6-91 from a trampoline accident. Since Sherry's death, Martha goes to their local hospital each night and takes pictures of the newborns. The revenue goes to Sherry's scholarship fund, two of which are given each year. What a wonderful way for Sherry to be remembered. Sherry's symbols are snowflakes.



Since so many of us have angels as symbols for our children, Bonnie Altenhein's book, **Christmas ANGELS** is perfect for us. The introduction says:

Christmas is a magical time for the angels. When you believe in the miracle of Christmas, you will find their spirit everywhere. 'Tis the season to reflect on the true meaning of peace on Earth, and a time to renew our faith in men, women and angels of goodwill. Above all, it is our opportunity to recall that our Christmas angels are with us all year long, bringing tidings of comfort and joy.



Christmas Angels:

Transform "bah humbugs" into hugs and cuddles.

Are cheerleaders for the holiday season.

Deck the halls with unconditional love.

Put the romance into Merry Kissmas. Bring peace on Earth to men and women of goodwill.

Never gossip with Santa about who is naughty or nice.

Soar through the holidays with amazing grace.

Remember Christmas past, anticipate Christmas future, become Christmas present.

Make every snowflake as unique and wonderful as you are.

Recycle Aunt Ethel's fruitcake year after year after year. .

Rehearse rejoicing.

Work overtime so the elves can take a break.

Make miracles appear on 34th Street--and your street--when you open your heart to Christmas.

When you cheer up someone else, holiday blacks and blues turn to reds and greens.

If it is true "You are what you eat," then I am' 1?? pounds of bittersweet chocolate. (Even though I prefer milk chocolate)



