

LAMENTATIONS

Issue 56

M.I.D.D.L.E.

May 1997

May is once again raising its ugly head to be faced and endured but also celebrated. As I reflect on *May* and the many dates that are embedded in my memory, I know that it will come whether I want to face it or not. Since May 20, 1991, I now relate all events as either **BD (Before Jim's Death)**, or **AD (After Jim's Death)**, just as we Christians date everything either **BC** or **AD**. Do you find yourself doing that also? Prior to May 20, 1991, I either related events as happening before I was married, or before Young Jim's birth. Now that has changed, as has my life. Aren't you amazed how the single most important or devastating event in your life now controls everything about your life, even to your point of reference?

May 11th is Mother's Day. What do I do on this day? Do I pretend that all is well and that it is just another day? Since I am a mother, even though I have no child here on earth, I feel like the emperor who wore no clothes. He pretended to believe that he had on clothing until everyone shouted that he did not. I feel this way on Mother's Day. I am a Mother--Or maybe I should say that I am a *Childless Mother*. I did not strip myself of the distinct honor of being a mother, rather, the honor was stripped from me on May 20, 1991. When I get to Heaven, I believe that I will once again have that status. So I plan to wear a pink flower on Mother's Day to signify that I am a mother, even if I am a childless mother.

May 24th is our 29th wedding anniversary. Young Jim was buried the day before our anniversary, so even that date now carries a different connotation. Even though this is a sad day because of its relationship with Jim's death, it is also a day of celebration. I thank God each day that I have the love and support of such a wonderful man. God has truly blessed me in so many ways.

May 12th is Honor's Night at our local high school. Young Jim was killed on his high school Honor's Night. How ironic that this is now the night that several Williamsburg High School students will receive the Jim Taylor, II Scholarships. What a bittersweet moment for us. It is heart-wrenching to be reminded that these students are receiving these scholarships because of Young Jim's death. But it is also comforting to know that even in his death, he is changing young people's lives. He continues to give. There are currently 7 Jim Taylor, II scholars who are attending Cumberland College. The first one hopes to graduate this year. He was presented a medallion when he graduated from high school and he will now wear it as he walks across the stage to receive his diploma and shakes my husband's hand. Another bitter-sweet moment.

May 31st is my mother's birthday and I am so thankful that I had such an exemplary role model from which I tried to pattern my mothering. If Young Jim felt half as proud of me as I was of my mother, then I succeeded.

May, like any month and any situation, has very sad, but also very happy dates to observe. Even though Young Jim is no longer with us physically, I would not have traded the grief I now experience with the privilege of being his mother and knowing and loving him. When there is great sorrow, it only proves that there was once great joy.

If you had told me 6 years ago that I would not only be functioning, but enjoying life, I would have thought you were either insane, or totally thoughtless as to the extent of my loss. Today I can truthfully say that I am a happy person, that I look forward to each new day, and that I have been blessed more than most. Young Jim is still missed each and every day, but he has now become a part of me and I feel that I carry him with me through each day. When he was still physically with us, he was *beside* me. Now he is *within* me and that gives me great comfort and courage. I believe that I came to this realization when I finally accepted the fact that I will not see him again in this lifetime. I must go on with life and he will be with me in all that I do.

When I found this graphic, I felt that it was a gift from Young Jim. May this Mother's Day be special for you in knowing that you were and are loved.



Grief Grafts

Gam and Becky Greer have lost all of their 4 children. Stephen, 2, died from Leukemia, 11-17-79. January 16, 1995, their oldest son, Buzzy (23) killed his younger brother Todd (14) and his younger sister Kami (10) and then himself. Becky gave the following message at a Prayer Service for children which was held at the First Baptist Church, London, 1-26-97:

I would like to thank all of you for coming out today to remember our children and your children. It means a lot to Gam and me to know that you have not forgotten, Buzzy, Todd, Kami, and some of you may remember Stephen. Please don't be afraid to mention their names to us. We long to hear their names spoken and we love sharing our memories of them. We also love hearing memories you may have of them. They were great kids and we hope that you will never forget them.

When you speak of our children to us and to others, it is a reminder and all affirmation that they did live, that they were and are a part of each of us who knew them. They walked with us, they talked with us, they played with us. Their lives did make a difference and I am grateful for the time I had with them. They loved and they were loved.

Most of us have loved ones who have died, and we miss them terribly. But, we must remember that the love we shared with them can never be destroyed. Their love lives all. The memories live all. The spirit lives on. Todd, Kami, Buzzy, and Stephen, as well as all our loved ones who have gone all before us, continue to be a part of all who knew them.

We are all connected by our humanity. We are all family. We are all God's children and God has called us to love one another. It is important for us to reach out in love to each other because it is the love that keeps us going and it is the love that lives on.

In this fast-paced society we live in, it seems we don't take time for what is really important, and that is our relationships with each other. We need to

remember to take time to let our children know they are loved and cared about. We need to encourage our children every chance we get, because none of us knows what each new day will hold for us. Gam and I know that only too well. We learned 17 years ago when we took our son, Stephen, for a routine checkup on a rainy Wednesday in October. It was a day like any other day. But when they told us he had leukemia, it was a day that changed our lives forever. We learned then that nothing is more important than family and relationships. It was a lesson learned the hard way, but how thankful we are for all the time we were able to spend with our precious children. We truly valued the time we spent with them.

When we sat at the breakfast table as a family together all that January day two years ago, it again, was a day like any other. Kami rode her bike and played with her dog. She went to gymnastics and ballet and she sang all the way home. Todd played basketball with some of his friends and then had his greatest basketball practice ever. Buzzy watched TV and went to visit a friend. It was a day like any other, but when the day was done, our lives were again changed forever.





Again, I was reminded of the importance of relationships, but only after much grieving. My suffering tended to draw me away from worldly cares and friends, but it brought me closer to God. I have now come to know that nothing is more important than our relationship with God. He calls us to reach out to able another in love. He calls us to make a difference in each other's lives. We all need each other.

It is true that we don't know what tomorrow holds for us, but we can share ourselves with each other today.

We can make a difference in the lives of those we come in contact with - especially our children. When we see them at church, or at a ball game, or walking down the street, we need to acknowledge them - call them by name, treat them with dignity and let them know that we care about them. As they get older and become faced with more and more challenges and temptations and you see that they are stumbling or are losing their way, reach out to them

and let them know you care about them. How I wish someone could have made that difference for Buzzy. We must show our children God's love so that they can come to know Him and know His promise that nothing, not even death, will ever separate us from His love.

As we remember my children, and as we remember your children, may we remember that it is the love we share that lives all ".

 Stephen's symbol is an apple, 
Buzzy's symbol is a guitar
Kami's symbol is a horse and 
Todd's symbol is a UK  basketball.

Two sons of Luther and Rosemary Smith, Drew (4-27-74) and Jeremiah (7-4-77), were killed in an automobile accident, 7-23-92. A wonderful article was written about Rosemary and her ministry by Jan Galletta in the *Chattanooga Free Press*. Ms. Galletta wrote:

No loving parents ever want to outlive a cherished child. Yet on a steamy July day in 1992, Kentucky couple Rosemary and Luther Smith buried not one, but two of their sons after the brothers were killed in a car wreck while returning from a rock concert.

"Just like that, both were gone," recalls Rosemary. She learned of the double loss when the local police chief in her Beattyville, Ky., hometown dropped by one of several drugstores owned by the Smiths to share the sad news.

"It wasn't a 'normal' death; it wasn't right," she continues. "My mother had died from cancer when I was Only 25, but the boys hadn't even been sick. Your children are your future, and we went through all the 'what-ifs' and the things that they might have done, and were just so angry.

As they raged, Rosemary, Luther and their third son, Jordan, then II, asked themselves, "What had we done?"

"We were an ordinary, but very blessed family who were involved in our community and in our church," she notes. "Drew and Jeremiah worked for

others who weren't as fortunate, and they had been in a cancer benefit the weekend before They died; that's the kind of kids they were. "

But in time, "we realized we hadn't done anything; it was just an accident. "

Even as the grieving family began to feel the full gamut of emotions that bereavement entails, they were surrounded by loving supporters.

Representing various faiths, their ranks included Episcopal priests, Catholic nuns and myriad church members. Customers, neighbors and classmates of the boys offered diverse comforts, from consoling words to covered dishes.

Touched by all the testaments to Drew's and Jeremiah's genuine impact on others, Rosemary struggled to "put my body on auto pilot, to be standing and in full control at the funeral. I wanted to thank all those people for making such tributes to my sons. "

The Smiths were just as grateful for the company of others as they were for acts of kindness.

"For two weeks, I couldn't be alone, and Luther and I couldn't do anything for Jordan because we were so overcome ourselves. He had to grow up way too soon," says Rosemary, who adds that a Hospice counselor helped the youth.

"I would play Drew and Jeremiah's videos and cry and cry. I wanted to cover my head and stay in bed, but that wouldn't have served their memory.

"You have to find the middle ground," she tells about mourning. "You can't pretend they didn't exist, but you can't just give in to the grief"

One well-meaning friend who steered her toward that "middle ground" was a casual customer who telephoned to say that she had also lost a child and had "now made it a month." That seemed a significant victory to Rosemary, who felt she was fighting for survival "five minutes at a time."

Two weeks after the boys' funerals, a similar message of encouragement arrived in the form of a "grief packet": a workbook, literature and other aids of solace, mailed by a fellow Kentucky mother who had "made it a year" since the death of her only child.

Within a week, the Smiths paid a call on the parcel's sender, a woman named

Dinah Taylor, who is the wife of Kentucky's Cumberland College president.

In many ways, that watershed visit proved to be a turning point.

"Dinah was my lifeline; I wouldn't be here without her," says Rosemary. She adds that her mentor in mourning not only shared her experience in such mundane matters as going to the grocery store for the first time after a loss, but also seemed to give the Smiths "permission to grieve."

Mrs. Taylor also engaged Rosemary in the healing outreach that the two continue today under the "Fellow Travelers" guise.

Fellow Travelers, explains Rosemary, is an informal effort that works sort of like a bereavement support group, via the post and the telephone line.

It finds Dinah compiling and mailing a monthly newsletter (**Lamentations**) that includes parent-authored profiles of late children (Grief Grafts), among other gentle word gifts, aimed at easing the reader's pain by offering understanding and personal stories of prevailing over tragedy.

As the more gregarious member of the pair, Rosemary's role is to call grieving parents with expressions of caring and concern. Then she follows up the conversation by sending a package, stuffed with books, videos and copies of coping materials that she has culled from her voracious reading on the subject.

Defraying all expenses themselves, they politely decline all offers of financial assistance and, to date, have placed scores of telephone calls and sent out more than 600 compassionate parcels. A recent recipient: Bill Cosby.

"We listen, we talk about this child, we cry together. We can help people by sharing their grief," states Rosemary, who paraphrases a favorite writer's description of the process. "The grief is like a mountain, but every time people hug you, it's as though they take a scoop out of that mountain and carry it away." Besides her work with Fellow Travelers, she has found some consolation in other constructive acts, ranging from the establishment of scholarships in her sons' names at McCallie and at Lee County High School to the commission of a dazzling dome in Cumberland College's Lodge.

The vaulted ceiling is vibrantly painted with cherubs and special symbols for youths who have passed away.

Their stores form the basis of a book, **Children of the Dome**, Rosemary will soon publish.

Closely linked on the dome, as they were in life and death, Drew and Jeremiah's angel-images are accompanied by their yellow butterfly icons.

The Smiths came to associate the little insects with their beloved late sons after a curious series of phenomena that seem only explainable from a spiritual standpoint--a rationale to which Rosemary is fully receptive.

"Parents who've lost a child live with one foot in this world and one foot in the here after. We're more open to the other side," she says matter-of-factly.

In some ways, bereavement has also provided a new perspective on the past.

For example, when Drew was a McCallie sophomore, he brought a Chinese student named Fong Zhu home for Christmas break. The teen friend became family, not only because of the swift, strong emotional bond with the Smiths, but also because the 1989 Tiananmen Square upheaval precluded reunion with his kin.

"I believe he was sent to us by God; when Drew and Jeremiah were killed, Fong was still here for Jordan," Rosemary says. The Smiths were also able to effect the later emigration of Fong's fiance, Xinyu, now his wife.

"Two families in China have given up their children for us," she continues, "and in hindsight, it almost seems as though the year before the boys died was a sort of preparation for Luther, Jordan and me to live alone."

Yet, she and Luther weren't quite strong enough to live in a Kentucky home that was empty of children when the 1996 school term arrived and Jordan pleaded to attend the prep school his late brothers had so loved. In January, the family opted to move to this city, where Jordan attend, McCallie as a day student.

Here, just as in Kentucky, "we live to help other people and we live our lives, day by day," says Rosemary.

"Those lives have changed and we can never go back to the way we were

before Drew and Jeremiah died. But I feel at peace with where they are. If I didn't know for certain that I would see them again, I couldn't go on. Faith keeps us going."

Drew's and Jeremiah's symbols are yellow butterflies and angels.

Frankie (5-15-72) son of Bob and Roxie Carrothers, was killed in an automobile accident, 7-4-93. Roxie writes a newsletter for Compassionate Friends in Sheboygan, WI. The following poems were written to remember Frankie on his birthday:

*You were a rebel
But a rebel with a heart,
And with every beat a foul's
The pain remains.
From that day we thought
Would never come to pass,
We know that you're at peace now, Your
love is shining in the light.
Even though we still miss you so.
Your laughter and your smile
God, please take good care of our baby
brother.
Love, Pam, Bobbi, Shelly & Walt*

In Loving Memory of Frankie Carrothers

Twenty-two years ago, today, I received one of the most precious gifts of my life. That was you.

You brought laughter, love, beauty, gentleness, energy, imagination and warmth.

I will always celebrate that day.

Losing you has been one of the worst things that will ever happen to me. I know one would have been impossible without the other. I've had to question every belief I have ever had I don't have a lot of answers, but I think that the only important thing that we ever leave is love. Your cup ran over with love.

I also know that where you are must be so very beautiful, because God made you and you were beautiful.

I miss you, baby. Happy birthday.

May the Lord be between us while we are apart from each other.

*All of our love as always, Mom & Dad
(5-15-94)*

*In Loving Memory of
Frankie Carrothers*

*Today is your 23rd Birthday, baby.
No words will ever express the void that has filled our lives and hearts since you left. We send you our love on your birthday and every moment of every day. I hate the word, 'rest in peace' because one thing you didn't do was rest. You were a bundle of activity. A restless heart, taking in all of life that you could in the all too brief time that you were here. So, be in God's peace, son. Know that we love you and are doing our very best to fulfill the work we are here for. Until we meet again.*

"I know now... that nothing has carried me up into the life of God or done more to open out the infinite meaning of love than the fact that love can span this break of separation, can pass beyond the visible and hold right on across the chasm."--Rufus Jones.

Our love, as always, Mom & Dad (5-15-95)

Roxie shared her suggestion for **MIDDLE: Memories Into Daily Deeds** Linding Etemity.



Frankie's symbol, are the wind and a rosary.



Art and Eleanor Foss' son, John (5-2-65), died from bladder cancer, 10-5-93. Last year, Eleanor shared her thoughts on Mother's Day:

I think of you so much in this painful month of May. Mother's Day and Jim's "anniversary day"-- I have a hard time considering an anniversary tiny, yet surely it is not just another day!

John so loved his birthday and never overlooked Mother's Day--and as his favorite cherry tree and flowers bloom-- the conflicting emotions of the joy of his life and our gratitude for him, combating in my mind, why does life renew in our yard and not for John--at least as we knew him!

I have no answers and not always acceptance.

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



Bruce and Karen James' son, Caleb (4-26-80), died 7-23-95, when he was 15 years old. Karen wrote this poem, 6-25-96:

Mother's Mourning

*No where to turn or hide
Grief remains--leaves me worn
Washing over me, like the tide.
Future is no longer on my side.
Minutes, hours, days are anguish.
Sleep only sometimes an ally.
Too often, dreams are hurtful,
Fifful--a trickster who lied
Promising a haven from tears,
Luring me to shut my eyes,
Forget--pretend all is the same and well.
Between moments of wake and sleep
When thoughts give way to dreams,
My mother's heart weak yet cried,
"My son has died!--has died"
Many means I have tried
To find release--a little peace
In life's busyness.
Pushing the isolation of suffering
Into the distance of existence.
Still the whisper of sorrow remains
Part of my life--filling space and time,
The reservoir of joy the boy owned
Now I mourn.
I have been poured out!
All the weakened contents of my faith,
security
Spilled before me, exposed--undenied
Trivial and meaningless my pursuits seem
In eternity's scheme.
Great and irreplaceable loss shakes me--
Screams and forces me forlorn.
Internalize Grief's message,
Let a deeper me be born.
Not allow insignificance to absorb
And take my spirit hostage.
As the journey relentlessly pushes forth,
Fill me with goodness, wisdom adorn,
Strong and useful,
This mother who mourned*

Caleb's symbol is a treasure chest which is full of the riches in Heaven.



Marcia Carson's son, Dell (12-22-69), was murdered 12-15-91. Marcia wrote this poem about a Mother's love in '95:

A MOTHER'S LOVE

*A mother's love encompasses all
From snow capped mountains to valleys
small.*

*A mother's love will go the last mile
A mother's love protects her child*

*A mother's love brings light to dark
A mother's love heals a saddened heart.*

*A mother's love smiles through tears
And brings joy to a child's growing
years.*

*A mother's love bends its head at night
And prays that her child will be all
right.*

*A mother's love pretends to others That
it's not hard being a mother.*

*A mother's love will watch her child
Slowly being carried down the church
isle.*

*A mother's love with pain in her head
Says "Weep for me--. My child is dead "*



Dell's symbols are box-
ing gloves and a unicorn.



Rev. Jerry and Martha Norsworthy's daughter and son-in-law, Carol (11-10-72) and Bryan Luffman, were killed in a van accident, 12-22-93. Martha tells about the author of the poem, Janet Ferguson:

*Last Mother's Day one of our church
members gave me this poem. Their son
was picked up on our church van by my
daughter and son-in-law before they
were killed. Janet and her husband
drive our church van now. They are
very special people and they really
minister to Jerry and me. This poem is
very special to me.*

*From Heaven Above--With All My Love
Happy Mothers Day*

Dear Mother,

*As I look down from above
I can see your shining love.
A mother's love showing tenderly.*

*The same you always showed to me.
I was so very proud of you.
A mother, loving, kind, and true.
Raising me, you did your best.
I always felt so happy and blest.
A mother like you, none other could
compare.
I wouldn't have traded you for another
one anywhere.
I just wanted to write to let you know,
How much you meant and I loved you
so.
On this Mother's Day though we're
apart,
I know I'm still there in your heart.
Keep on loving in that same motherly
way.
To you a very Happy Mother's Day.
When all the Mother's Days on earth
are o'er
I'll tell you "Happy Mother's Day" up
here on Heaven's beautiful shore.*



Card's symbols are a rainbow and
buttercup. Bryan's symbols are a deer
and roses, and the symbols for both of
them are a heart with hands.

Willie and Ella Prater's daughter,
Merri Kathryn (6-4-78), died from an
automobile accident 4-3-96. Anita
Johnson wrote the following poem
about Ella:

Ella, A Christian Mother

*There once was a lady named "Ella"
Who captured the heart of her land,
She was regal, wise and strong
Fate would not get the upper hand.*

*Some of us are blessed with gifts
With song, or rhyme, or such,
Ella has a wondrous gift
She's blessed with the human touch.*

*Her darling daughter was taken away
And Ella was broken-hearted,
But she kept her faith and tarried on
Her mission was only started*

*Weak in body, but strong in spirit,
She soothed others as they wept,
Like a disciple she spoke of Christ
A promise to her God she kept.*

*Our lives have truly been deeply
touched*

*By this lovely lady so gracious,
Who cried in the depths of her sorrow,
"He gave His only son for us."*

*A hush is now over the land
It's saddened, but revived,
Because a Christian mother had the
courage to say,
"My God is alive!"*

The 1997 **Compassionate Friends' National Conference** will be in Philadelphia, July 24-27, 1997. Elaine Stillwell will be a presenter for two of the workshops: One workshop is for the newly bereaved, *Helping Your Heart Through Grief*; and the other is for Chapter leaders entitled *How To Build a Strong Chapter*. For further information you can telephone (215)581-5000 or you can FAX (215)581-5069. Reservations must be received by June 23, 1997.

Another fellow traveler, Kay Bevington, will be conducting a workshop entitled, *Coping with the death of an only child/all children*.

Janna (4-6-81), the daughter of David and Peggy Webb, died from a brain hemorrhage 7-12-93. Peggy shared her view on time and also sent a copy of a most supportive and caring letter she had written to a fellow travelers:

*David and I have recently
celebrated our twenty-seventh
wedding anniversary, and I am
happy, though somewhat surprised,
to say that we really did celebrate.
We are, in so many ways, finding life
to be rewarding despite our loss. I
also have just marked my forty eighth
birthday, and in reminiscing, I have
realized that I am happy to be this
age, no other. I am content to be a
middle-aged woman with a loving
husband and a twenty-one year old
son who has plans to marry a
beautiful young lady from Eastern
Kentucky. And I am happy to be the
mother of one beautiful daughter
whose life continues, though I do not
know exactly*

through what means she is praising her Lord at this moment. Always one who fought time, who feared that there would not be enough time to do all that I wanted, I viewed time as my enemy because it brought to an end the good times. Losing Janna has made those good times seem more precious, and I rue the time I spent worrying about things over which I had no control. Time is not my enemy, for I realize that the only certain time is now, and that part of my task in honoring God is to make this life He has given me the best that I can make it, So, I enjoy my teaching, look toward retirement and grandmotherhood and happily anticipate, sometimes even long, for the day when I will see my sweet Janna again. No, time is not my enemy. It is instead the gift God gives me for now and eternity, and I praise Him for it.

Dear Fellow grieving parents,

You do not know me, nor I you, but I do know something of your pain at this time in your life. A friend tells me that your pain is new and that it seems to worsen with time--not heal as the Proverb promises.

I wish that I could promise you that the pain will go away. I cannot. It will be a part of your life and you will learn to live with it. I cannot tell you at what point you will begin to feel as though the life you have is worth the effort it takes to overcome the pain, for it was some time coming to me. I cannot tell you that there will be something to fill the gap that your daughter's death left in your life, for nothing will ever do that. Children are too precious and too important to be replaced.

What I can promise is that God offers the comfort we need while we try to learn to live without the children around whose futures we had built our own. Even if we are angry, He understands. He doesn't leave us in our rooms to sulk; instead he waits patiently outside our door, knowing that we will eventually have to come out of our anger for the sustenance only He can provide. He knows that other people will try to help us, but that their efforts are ineffectual because they haven't endured this pain. They will want to help with words, little guessing how empty they are. They will try to help with silence, little guessing the bitterness of the mother's heart who cries out, "Why have they all forgotten her? Why do they never speak

her name, the name that was and still is music to my ears?" They will try to help with suggestions about where and how to find support groups, little knowing that to hear others' burdens at this time is just more than we can hear, for it means that there is simply too much hurt in this world and that something is sorely amiss.

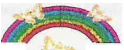
No, they don't know, but He does. He loved a son whose very name also brought joy to His heart. He watched His child suffer and die, and His heart broke. He knows the pain we feel, and He doesn't offer platitudes that all is for the best, that perhaps, after all, death saved our children from some other catastrophe, that our children now will never have to suffer the trials life offers us all. What He does is simply wait outside our door until we do come out, put His arms around us and say, "You cry if you want to, child You have a right. You scream if you need to. I'm going to be right here. If you wake up at night and wish desperately for someone to occupy the bed you go to check, wanting merely one last feel of her breath on your cheek, I will be there. I will listen to the whispered cry of your heart that says, 'Do I really have to stay here, Lord?' I will be there when you awake in the morning, fearing the day ahead, for in it will be so many memories and so much less love than before she left. I will walk with you through your day, and if people look at you as if you are crazy when you say, 'Help me, Lord,' ignore them. I hear you, and I will not leave you to suffer this alone."

Slowly, with Him beside you, you will grow stronger and there will be things that give life meaning. You will find ways to use your life to honor Him who gave it to you in the beginning and ways to honor the daughter whose life was the best part of yours. You will eventually come to understand that the years of joy you had are more than many people ever experience in a lifetime, and that, given the choice, you would not trade that for any promise of a painless life, one in which that child never existed There will be times when you feel that you have reached a point of calm and times when you are certain that this particular moment hurts worse than any other before. You will take

three steps forward and two back, until eventually you can look around you and say. "Yes, Lord, I am grateful for the life I have now. There is much that is good in it and so many wonderful reminders of the beauty that was my child I love you, my Father, for that. "

If, fellow grieving parents, you imagine that you see my own journey through loss, you are right. I don't know what your exact journey will be, but yours will probably be like mine in many ways and yet different, too. The only constant in this journey that so many of us must take is our Father and His love for us. I will pray for you that you will continue to lean on Him.

If it helps you to talk to others of your loss, I will be glad to hear from you by mail or phone. If not, wait. Only you know what you are able to do.

Janna's symbols are  yellow butterflies and a rainbow.

Martha Ridenour's only daughter, Suzanne (9-4-56), died from aspiration, 9-20-94. Martha shares her views of Mother's day:

It has been a little over 2 ½ years since my daughter's death and there is never a waking moment that the pain is not with me still. The nights are not much better, as I seem to relive it all over again in my dreams and wake up crying.

Mother's Day is a little different from other holidays for me, because I am so grateful that I had my daughter. After miscarrying 3 times, I felt Suzanne was my miracle child, and I still do.

So to the question of where I am now in my grief and where I am going, they say that when you lose your parents, you are losing your past, but when you lose a child, you have lost a piece of your future.

In my case, since I lost both parents at an early age, never knowing my grandparents; lost my husband 15 years ago and my only brother 18 years ago, Suzanne my only child, was not just a piece of the future, but all of the

future. She was the shining star of my life and so the only answer is that now that she is gone, I am going nowhere, just marking time.

But I do try to use these days by reaching out to other people who are grieving or who have sickness in the family. So you know, I gave the college (Pikeville) new dance studios in her memory as she loved dancing so much, and taught ballet at the college. My next project at the college is starting a dance scholarship in her memory. I redid a couple of rooms at the hospital in memory of Suzanne and in memory of my husband; bought some new furniture for the public library; bought some classroom books for our Sunday School. I have tried to do things in Suzanne's memory that will benefit other people. At least, this keeps me busy, and pushes the pain to the back of my mind for awhile.

Sometimes, in my low moments, I look around at my friends who still have an intact family--parents, husbands, children and grandchildren, and wonder if somehow I have displeased God and have not deserved to keep any of my family. But still, my faith in God is my salvation and that faith never falters.

There is a poem by Jane Merchant in the book, **Grief for A Season** which seems to express my life as it is now:

Full half a hundred times I've sobbed
I can't go on, I can't go on.
And yet, full half a hundred times
I've hushed my sobs and gone.

My answer, if you ask me how,
May seem presumptuously odd,
But I think that what kept going on
When I could not, was God,

Ballet slippers are Suzanne's symbol.



Nancy Hannon's son, Michael Price (1-28-74), was killed in an automobile accident, 2-6-93. Nancy lamented about the anniversary of Michael's death date:

I am writing to thank you for remembering Michael and me on the dreaded date of February 6. Thank You! I appreciate it very much.

In **Lamentations** you ask that we Fellow Travelers reach out to one another. Dinah, it helps so very much to have support from other parents who have "been there, done that" and share some of the same feelings. During the past four years, I have sent out many cards and letters to parents on the anniversary of the death of their child. On this dreaded date, it helps to know that someone is remembering you and your child.

I am still very hurt six weeks after the fourth anniversary of Michael's death.

The reason for this hurt is, I received your card on the anniversary of his death, but nothing from anyone else. No cards, notes, not even a phone call from anyone in our group on the morning of February 6th. I even mailed two cards to fellow bereaved parents.

If people knew the hurt that is felt when a parent and child are forgotten on this dreadful anniversary, in the future they would surely try to remember to acknowledge the parent and child,

I honestly do not know why no one else remembered Michael's death. Is it because it has been four years? Four years or forty years, this date will still be the worst day of my life.

Because of the hurt and rejection I felt due to the lack of remembrance by fellow travelers. I vowed, that I would never send another card to anyone.

Now, I see it different. I don't want anyone, on their child's anniversary, to feel the way I felt on Michael's. I will continue to remember these precious children and their parents on this date.

What can I / we do to stress to our fellow travelers the importance of remembering the children and their parents on the anniversary of the child's death? Fellow travelers should remember these children by sending a card, a note or by making a phone call to the parents to acknowledge the date.

Nancy also described her view of "middle:"

I love the new subtitle you have chosen for **Lamentations**. "MIDDLE" our goal should be, "To be in the middle." The middle can vary quite a bit. Therefore it will give us some space in the event we falter. As we all know, in our quest of successfully learning to live with and

through our grief we tend to falter from time to time.

The goal of MIDDLE will be easier to attain than the goal of SUCCESS.

For me, success was an extremely hard goal to accomplish. I have always felt that I could never quite fully reach the success plateau of my grief I tend to backslide at times. About 50% of the time, I do not feel that I am very SUCCESSful in the way that I handle my grief. With MIDDLE, I know I can attain my goal. MIDDLE averages around 50%, give or take a few points. I can fall short of my goal, rebound a little, and still average near the MIDDLE. This goal should not be out of reach for anyone.

My suggestion for words to fit MIDDLE is "leave it alone." Wayne did an excellent job in explaining MIDDLE. Let the true meaning remain. We can all strive to be in the middle and become a SUCCESS in our goal.

With each passing day, we learn to live with our grief a little better. We feel worse on certain days, but we strive to carry on. It would be judicious to even think we could be as happy and content as we were in the past. We need to find a place in the MIDDLE that we can live with and thrive on.

Bottom line is, we never will, nor do we ever want to feel as good as we did when we had our precious child here with us. With time, we will gradually begin to heal, but the enormous scar of death will remain with us for the remainder of our lives. For all eternity we "want to" be reminded of our child, We want to desperately miss this child, keep the wonderful memories alive, and have our friends and relatives remember our child.

We feel tremendous grief and, carry a heavy burden hut, how would it be if we didn't grieve, if we didn't feel the deep hurt and pain? We would be disastrous as parents, true failures, if we didn't have this deep grief and severe pain. To hurt so bad is due to loving so deeply. We have unconditional love for our babies. Even through my deepest, darkest moments of grief, I thank God every day for giving me the ability to love, and to unconditionally bestow this great love upon my children. It is hard to believe that there are people who do

not or cannot love another being. If they are fortunate enough to give even the tiniest amount of love, it will be a very shallow, superficial love. Even during our most intense stages of grief, we have something to be thankful for--Yes, the ability to have and to share this wonderful deep love. Our children have to be very proud of the unconditional love that we have for them. Our love is contagious, our children caught it and gave it back to us.

Our temple was destroyed. At the present time, we are in the MIDDLE of rebuilding. Our goal: pick up what few remaining pieces we have and begin the monumental task fit rebuilding We should be content to reach the MIDDLE of our structure. Stop in the middle, for our life can never be whole again. We can, however, become stronger and more determined if we strive for and reach our goal (The MIDDLE). We cannot fall apart, we must go on. We have to keep trying to "do our best" and "be our best" in order that we will someday join our loved ones in the biggest temple of all.

I also have a back-up suggestion for MIDDLE: Mastering (the) Insurmountable Devastation (of) Death Leaves (us) Esprit de corps (French meaning, supporting the common goals of a group) (Supporting our group's goal of being in the middle.)

Michael's symbols are a smiley face and red rose.



Billy and Trish Barton's son, Michael (12-5-63), died 4-3-96. Trish shares her thoughts about MIDDLE and Mother's Day:

YES!! MIDDLE is much easier to attain. I have chosen this acronym: Memories I Desire, Deep Love Endures.

The anniversary of Michael's death is weighing heavily on me. Easter is also at the same time. A time for reflection--we had Michael's memorial service the day before Easter. A time for joy because Jesus lives--we know Michael's soul is with Him. I am leaning into my grief, allowing the experience to mold me. I have found that busy-ness does not relieve my pain. But my daily quiet

time with my Heavenly Father, telling Him my pain, knowing that He loves me and understands me, does strengthen and comfort me one day at a time. God gave His only son--sacrificed Him with the cruel death of public ridicule and crucifixion. He knows our pain. To have His love we must believe in Him and ask Him for loving comfort. His love endures and never fails.

It seems like an eternity since Michael died--grief is slow, intense and hard work. It had been two years since I had seen Michael or touched him. Of course, we talked and corresponded really often in the months preceding. He was such a hugger, playful, jolly, gentle and loving son. I had always said he saw the world with romantic eyes. His eyes were caring and the most beautiful blue. His friends said he was the most patient person. His mother-in-law said she never heard him say a bad word about anyone. He took you as you were, accepting you unconditionally!

He had said to me that I was a rock. Now, I know I must be a rock!! He expects that strength of me. During a Bereaved Parents meeting last August, I attended an art seminar. We were given clay and instructed in 3 different segments of time to mold a shape. I called my shape a rock. "Michael, I am trying." I know I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me and on Him I stand.

During this year, I have been unorganized, unfocused, just wandering, it seems. My journey is taking me in many directions. I have set goals--most of them still unattained. The one job I started that is now completed, is as a leader of a First Place group. This is a Christian program to eat healthy. The program lasts 13 weeks, is based on Bible study and commitments. In January when this began, somehow I found myself going to the leader's meeting. At the time, I was on antibiotics and it was difficult to hear or think clearly, but I was there anyway and committed to lead.

I hope that somehow I am being obedient by acting upon convictions that I feel. Priorities for me have changed. I simply want to love everyone I come in contact with. It's a compulsion. I want to see the good in them. There is no way anyone can know the innermost feelings and needs of another person. But everyone needs love!

The way I feel now is that I can't wait another minute to show God's love because there may not be another minute and because God has told us in John 13:34 "A new commandment I give you, that ye love one another as I have loved you; that ye also love one another."

Do you wonder if it's a coincidence that Mother's Day is shortly after Easter? No greater love has ever been shown than Jesus' love for us. My father died in April, 1991, my brother died in August, '94, another brother in July, '67. But the death of my son,, my only son, my beloved son, Michael, has shown we that to love and be loved is God's greatest gift.

As a mother, I am forever thankful for my son, Michael, and my daughter, Given. As a grandmother of a precious grandson, Matt, and a precious granddaughter, Hallie, I am forever grateful. For it is only by the grace of God that I am a mother.

To you, my children, on Mother's Day and every day and for eternity, I love you!



Michael's symbols are a duck in flight, an elk bugling, a fish jumping, a horse running, and Michael the Archangel.

Mildred Hodson's daughter, Lydia Copeland (9-22-54), died from complications from treatment of Hodgkin's disease 10-28-91. Mildred described her "middle:" My Identity Died - Delivering Love Eternal.

Lydia's symbol is an angel.



Richard and Geri Vallotton's daughter, Alicia (6-1-74), was killed in a truck accident 3-25-93. Geri shared her Mother's Day thoughts and her suggestion for MIDDLE:

It has been 4 years, as of 3-25, since Alicia was killed, and as you know, I'm

still "working" my way through it. But with God's help, I am learning to be more acceptant of His will.

I was sitting on my porch one day recently, looking up on the hill at Alicia's grave, and I began to wonder just what I was grieving for. I love my daughter very much--our love is eternal and will never die--and to have her life here end so abruptly at 18 years, with a promising future ahead of her, is just not understandable. I know that Alicia is happy in Heaven and it's a better place than here, so why do I grieve so? I miss her presence and everything about her, but would I really wish her back from Paradise? Then it dawned on me what I was grieving so for was not her spirit that lives forever, but that the part of her that was part of me is lying in the grave. And now her spirit is free--no longer a part of me!

So, is it selfish of me to dwell on her absence and to want to hold on to things that belonged to her and all her memories? I think not. But there has to be a "middle." A time for sorrow and a time for thankfulness that God entrusted her to us for this time; a time for remembering that her life had purpose--touching so many other's lives on her journey here.

I will always miss my daughter, she was the youngest of our five children. Her absence has left a huge void and our family will never be the same again. But I will always be grateful that God allowed me to nourish and give birth to this beautiful soul; then guide, direct, and teach the person she became. Our love for her will never die and my memories of her through in fancy, childhood, adolescence, and to adulthood will always be a joy to me. I will always be proud to say, "I'm Alicia's Mom!"

Making - To wade through

It - our grief

Daily - each day

Despite - resenting

Life's - circumstances

Effects - consequences.



Alicia's symbols are a dolphin and daisies.

Scott (10-24-77), the son of Howard and Sandy Graham, took

his own life. Sandy remembers past Mother's days:

Mother's Day is a very difficult day for me, as I am sure it is for all Mom's who have lost a child. It used to be such a special day. I would choose what I wanted to do. I chose to do something fun with my children and husband. A trip to the zoo or railroad museum or a drive to the mountains. It was a special day to spend with those who made me a Mom.

I remember my first Mother's Day, I was 4 months pregnant with my first child, Scott. I felt very protective of that tiny life inside me. I wondered how a person could multiply love. When you carry a life inside you and give birth to your child, the love is multiplied without any effort. This love continues to grow.

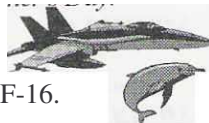
My first born is dead now, this will be my 3rd Mother's Day without Scott. I am very sad I have such a large part of me ripped apart. I feel as if I have a large hole in my heart. When my child died, I felt as if pain and sadness took over my huge reservoir of love.

Mother's Day now is a reminder that I am without one of my children. I can't see him do the things he wanted to do, share his joys and help him through the hard times. I have so much sadness. People tell me that I should remember the good memories and that should make me feel better. I am glad that I have memories, but right now, that still makes me sad; I wish my son were here today.

I don't know where I am going, I still take one day at a time. I am tired of people telling me that I shouldn't be so sad, after all, Scott's death was a long time ago. I don't like the fact that so many people think that one should stop grieving and or being sad as soon as the memorial service is over. I will be sad for the rest of my life because I am a Mom who has lost a child.

I will think of all of the Moms who are enduring the pain of losing a child or children on this Mother's Day,

Scott's symbols are a dolphin and an F-16.



Tim (6-17-67), the son of Frank and Norma Smith, was murdered,

5-19-82. Norma explained her MIDDLE:

Maybe I am reaching a MIDDLE and didn't know what to call it. That's not to say I don't slide back. The flowering redbud Tim helped plant just days before he died is in bloom, and that sets off a barrage of memories. I want to go out and hug that tree, and be so thankful it's still growing. After Tim died, the tree almost died, too. I remember asking God many times to save that tree. It was one of my connections to him and always will be.

I look back over the last fifteen, yes, fifteen years, and I see I have made small steps and also great strides when a person takes it on himself to murder one member of the family, he murders all the members, including brothers, sisters, aunts, etc. Life is never the same and some can't ever seem to find the MIDDLE.

This year, I resolved to try harder to make my life better. I started by going on a diet. I had gained some 70 pounds since Tim's death, and I couldn't lose any of it. I know I was hiding behind my weight; it was my defense against people that were more curious and prying than sympathetic.

Tim was tall and slim and trim, and weight conscious. I know when I reach my goal, he would be so proud I've lost about 23 pounds, and it seems great to get back into some clothes I couldn't wear.

How do I feel about Mother's Day? Well, I'm so proud my own mother is alive, yet, I'll never be able to celebrate it again for myself. Too many memories are tied in. Tim's death was some eight days after Mother's Day, so it's always really painful and I suppose it always will be.

Here are my thoughts about the MIDDLE:

Making It Daily, Debating Little Else

Mercy In Death Delivers Loving Endearments

Maybe In Death, Deeds Leave Encouragement



Maybe In Daylight, Death Looks Easier

Mourning Is Daily, Delivering Little Ease

Mostly In Denial, Death Lingers Eerily

I've been through all of these, but I really feel like my first choice describes me now.

Nothing much helps on the long days of my grief but then we have a glorious day.

Tim's symbols are a   and choir boy.



Ed and Brenda Harvey's daughter, Shay (11-7-69), was killed in an automobile accident, 1-4-93. Brenda reflects on past Mothers' Days:

As I approach another Mother's Day, my 5th since Shay's death, I am already into my "Springtime Dreaded Depression!" I do this each Spring. Spring always meant spring break, graduations, Easter, Mother's Day and all those wonderful times. I miss those so much; or rather, I miss the way they were.

Mother's Day is the most emotional, special day for me--more so than even Christmas.

Last year at church when our pastor had everyone go hug their Mom, my friend's daughter came over and hugged me. I was so touched! I had wept through the entire service. As I was leaving, my pastor said to me "You have a big hug waiting in Heaven."

My Mother's Day card from Shay, dated 1992 (her last), carried a note for me:

"Momma, I feel like we grow closer each year. You not only feel like a mother to me, but you also feel like my best friend, someone I can confide in, talk to, and most of all, someone I can trust. Have a wonderful Mother's Day. Sorry I can't be with you. I miss you, I love you, Shay, 1992"

I will cherish this card always. I get it out each Mother's Day and exhibit it with my others.

My prayers are for all Mothers on our special day.

Shay's symbol is a mortar and pestle.



Michael (1-25-71), son of Dick and Jean Sand, was killed in an automobile accident 6-18-94. Jean used Michael's

name in describing her MIDDLE:

When I speak of the MIDDLE, I don't know if I feel that it is one-halfway up, or one-half way down; one-half way there or one-halfway back. When you reach for the MIDDLE, I do feel that there is no return. You must go forward. I am a firm believer that if we have made it to the MIDDLE, we can get to the end, or the other side. I think the MIDDLE is a standing point, midway between extremes. It is an equal distance from start to finish. If and when you have reached the middle, you have gained a lot of ground.

The MIDDLE refers to many, many things, such as middle class, middle country, middle east, middle of the universe, middle ages, middle America, middle of the year. The MIDDLE is one-halfway between sorrow and happiness, in our case.

I can only say that each and every day, we took all things for granted. Myself and my family found out that the impossible is possible and nothing is forever. There really is a MIDDLE, and hopefully, we are reaching for it. We are hoping we will soon find it and find our way to the end of the sorrow and reach for the rainbow.

Things are better at our home, but before we reach the end, we have a long road to travel and a high mountain to climb. There is no other way to say it. The road is very long, very sad, very real, and very feeling. We must learn to go forward and reach for the rainbow and the end of that golden road.

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



Paula Hardin's son, Jeremy (3-24-75), died 9-5-94, as the result of injuries he sustained from falling from a bridge. Paula described her MIDDLE:

I love the concept of finding the MIDDLE. I've always been kind of a "middle" type person all my life. The MIDDLE is reachable, a goal we know in our hearts can be attained. The quote from Gerald Sittser's book was so apt - "Life is a little less sweet, death a little less bitter." We lose, we gain, we hold our own.

As for approaching Mother's Day and my journey of grief. Jeremy's death was September, 1994 - how quickly time has passed and yet it seems forever since I've seen him. Mother's Day will come as it does every year. Carrie, my sweet 14-year-old, will probably make me a card and do something nice for me. Nathan, my 18-year-old freshman, is also a sweetie but not prone to acts of thoughtfulness. Jeremy was always the rememberer, the one who bought the card, reminded the others that Mother's Day was coming; thought of something special. Carrie now seems to have taken on these wonderful qualities of Jeremy and I find great pleasure in that. I also try very hard not to "make her Jeremy." She is so very much like him--quick wit, a flair for the dramatic, loves the arts, old movies, games, likes me in her life--all the things that endeared me to Jeremy. Nathan is still Nathan. I remind myself that he is no different than what he always has been--a boy of a different nature; loves his home but doesn't get homesick; loves his mom and sister but takes us for granted; lives a life that we only know about through what he chooses to share. Somehow, there is relief in knowing that Nathan does not attempt to be Jeremy. I am comfortable in Nathan being Nathan.

I was asked the other day if the pain of Jeremy's death is the same. After some thought, I answered "yes." It is as painful today as it was immediately afterwards. But there is a difference. The difference is that I now, for the most part, "allow" myself to feel the pain. I cannot function if I give it too much room in my conscious being. I file it away; put it on a shelf, to be taken out and felt when I must either remind myself of what has happened or my thoughts demand it. When I really think about it, my body is racked with pain that still seems unbearable. I don't believe this will ever change. Sara Combs and I call it "the game." We both know how to play the game very well. A great deal of denial is required and I don't know if it's healthy, but it's a great survival mechanism.

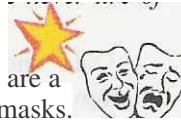
I've attended the Hospice grief sessions, the grief counseling at my church and I go to my own counselor who is great. Still, I don't know what I'm expecting. There remains an air of expectation and anticipation within me, which at this point, I attribute to my faith and hope in God. Do you and others feel this too?

As you know, Jeremy's birthday was March 24. It fell on the same day (Monday of Easter week) as the year in which he was born. Your card came in the mail and it warmed me all over to know there were others thinking of my Jeremy on his special day. Nathan, Carrie and I attended mass in honor of Jeremy, after which Father John went to breakfast with us as our birthday celebration. Carrie and I later went to see a movie we thought Jeremy would like and had dinner out. We planted flowers at the high school where rehearsals were going on in anticipation of the play that will start next week. Two boys, both friends of Nathan's, came and talked to us while we planted the flowers. One said he had never known Jeremy, but wished he had; the other lamented his loss. They spoke of how they fussed at the kids who threw trash in the landscaping around the memorial to Jeremy, how they demanded respect be shown by others. I felt good listening to them, but the reality also hit me that the people in that school today never knew Jeremy--he was a stranger to them.

One time earlier in the winter, I had stopped by to clean up around the memorial and a man and his son, who was probably 7 or 8, were waiting outside the school door to enter for basketball practice. As I worked, I saw the man watching me. He finally said, "Who was Jeremy Hardin." I told him, "He is my son." How distant I felt telling a stranger who was only mildly interested that it was my son who had died and was memorialized at this school. He asked no more, but merely said that that explained my gardening activities. I wanted to tell him more, to tell him the great things about my son; what a loss it was to me, to the world, but I instinctively knew this man didn't want to hear anymore and I chose not to share my story with him. I am very protective of Jeremy's memory and share it now only when I feel someone truly cares.

This year, Jeremy would have graduated from Ball State. He was a sophomore when he died. He will forever be in my memory as a college student. This moving from one stage in life to another is scary for me. I could think of Jeremy as being off to school because his friends were off, too. Now, with graduation approaching and old friends moving on to careers, marriage, moving away to find jobs, I can no longer think of Jeremy as off at school. The news the others share with me will not be anything I can identify Jeremy with for this will be territory in which he didn't get to travel in his short life. I will be a listener, not a sharer of news. I've found one of the hardest things to deal with is our sharing of "old news" for we don't have a "new news" anymore. That's why fellow travelers are so great--we never tire of our old news.

Jeremy's symbols are a twinkling star and drama masks.



Psamantha (8-10-82), the adopted daughter of Gary and Diann Foster, died from an asthma attack, 3-17-91. Diann shared:

Here are my words for MIDDLE:

My Individual Day To Day Life Enjoyment.

I just came back from spending a week in Lexington with our foster daughter, Jessica, who had back surgery on April Fool's Day. I had written the above before I left on the envelope & today, cleaning off my desk from a week's worth of mail, found it.

Even if I don't win, it's OK & this is what MIDDLE will remind me of every time I see it from now on.

The Redbuds & Dogwoods are so beautiful now. The daffodils cheered me last week and now the Tulips are blooming. The spring which came after Psamantha's death was, to me, gray. My whole life seemed gray for months and months. In fact, when spring '92 arrived it was a shock to my sense of sight that everything looked so bright and new and cheerful. I guess, when we experience such a tragedy, we become a little numb to what is happening around us.

There is a dogwood tree near Psamantha's grave which has both white and pink blossoms which reminds me that whatever is touched or brushed against during any stage in our life will change us forever, but we still may derive joy from our life as it is now even though it will never be the same as before our child died...

The first Mother's Day occurred just about two months after Psamantha's death. I was so numb. I was expecting this grief to be over soon and was worried I was abnormal because it was taking so long--was I ever naïve!!! Since Psamantha was handicapped, she had never made me anything without one of her sibling's help, so I didn't think her not giving me a gift would affect me. The lack of a gift did not. BUT, when I opened the card, my children gave me and her name was not on there; I dissolved into tears. I believe my reaction scared my children, because they are very subdued on Mother's Day now, and kind of tiptoe around watching me very closely. I cried for hours. Not because I didn't love them or appreciate the ones who were here, but because I missed the one who was not; and her name not on that card made her loss so final.

Another way I have changed is that I have every day as if it may be my last or my child's last day or my husband's. It's not so morbid as it sounds, but none of us have any guarantee that we will see the morrow. When my son moved to Washington DC, it was not as traumatic as what my friends have experienced when their children moved out. After all, I can pick up the phone and talk to him. I can e-mail him now, and since he's moved to Louisville, I can see him most every weekend. It is also freeing. If this may be my last day, what is a little dust, dirty dishes, or the 1001 things that come up to aggravate me? Let it go. How important is it? I tell my five-year-old when he scrapes himself, that he'll not remember it when he's 20. If it won't matter in 20 years, well, just go on **Minding your Individual Day to Day Life Enjoyment** and relish some chocolate to boost your spirit. (Amen.)

Diann's e-mail address
is djane@eagleweb.net.
Psamantha's symbol is a butterfly.



Glenn and Sylvia White's daughter, Amanda, died from an asthma attack, 8-95. Sylvia shared:

My name is Sylvia and my husband is Glenn. We have been married for 2 years, but have known each other several years prior to that.

Glenn's daughter, Amanda, died of an asthma attack in August of 1995. She had just started her senior year in high school and a group of friends had gone to a local teen club when she had the attack. She walked to the ambulance, but was DOA at the hospital and they could not revive her. She was very active and always considerate of others.

The night Glenn received the call, at first he thought she had wrecked her car. I am sure you can imagine his shock when he was told she was dead. The drive to the hospital seemed endless. When we arrived there, the parking lot and waiting room were full of teenagers in shock. One minute they were all dancing and having a great time and then suddenly one of them was gone. There was a constant stream of teens at the funeral home. They had to put speakers outside the day of her funeral because there were so many people. She was loved by so many. Even now, when we go to the cemetery, her friends still come and leave her messages, flowers and Mickey Mouse items. Mickey was her favorite idol, so I guess you could say Mickey Mouse is her symbol.



The loss of a child was not new to Glenn and me. My granddaughter, Ashley, age 5, died January 25, 1994. She was a very special little girl who was an inspiration to all who had the privilege of knowing her. She had cystic fibrosis or better known to children as 65 Roses. Ashley was in and out of the hospital all her short life. Every morning, when she was not living with me, I would call and ask her how she was feeling and her reply was always "Dood" meaning good. The only time she ever complained, which wasn't really a complaint, was when she needed a "tune up."

She would say, "Banmaw, I think I need to go to the hospital for my tune up." This was a 10 to 14 day treatment by IV". The nurses and doctors would always pet her because she was there about every 3 to 4 months and could do almost everything, including hooking herself up. They gave her a little pedal car and a driver's license to ride around the floor when she was there. Her last visit was January 22nd, and she said when she went in that she guessed she wouldn't get a speeding ticket this time. The nurses were always giving her speeding tickets when she was there for going too fast in the halls. She had to pay with hugs and kisses which she gave willingly. She was right, she didn't even get to drive this time.



Her car was a Volkswagen which she called a "slug bug. A Volkswagen would be her symbol.

Dale and Marlene Stokes' son, Darren (7-22-65), committed suicide, 3-31-86. Darren was their only child. Marlene gives ns encouragement:

I guess I might say with my grief, I am now able to celebrate the holidays with a certain degree of excitement. The joy is diminished and my life will never be the same care-free fun that it was with Darren.

Life does go on, however, and so do I. For me, the final outcome may be to live part of my life in honor of Darren, seeing the world with Darren in mind, and to live the end of the line as fully as it can be lived.

It has been a long, dark, lonely road I have traveled these past 11 years. It was a daily struggle to find a new "normal." Dale and I miss Darren and every part of being his parents, even the worries and frustrations. Darren's life was a gift to us, one we'll always cherish.

How do I feel about the celebration of Mother's Day now? Since it is a day of appreciation and respect, I believe grieving mothers deserve it more. We gave our child back. So this day will be my day. I am still a mother.



Darren's symbol is a deer.

Tom and Sissie Levi's son, Patrick (12-6-75) died, 3-7-96. Sissie lamented:

I am having such a hard time with my faith in family, friend, and especially church family. They don't understand, I know, but why aren't they a little more caring, a little more loving and understanding? I have never lost my faith in God, because I know "All things work together for good," (Romans 8:28), and I know He never ceases to care and His grace is never ending. So I am thankful for this!

Our Patrick was born December 6, 1975, to a single mother, unmarried and 17 years old. We adopted him in March of 1978--a blessing to us all. I had had Toxemia in 1968 with our oldest, Amy, and had not been able to get pregnant again. Then God sent us Patrick--a bundle of joy.

We brought him home for I visit, then home to stay. He never cried--just smiled.

He graduated from high school in 1994--so intelligent and talented. He sang in Chamber Choir and he and I cleaned our church since 1992. He went to the University of Kentucky for one semester.

His "intentions" were to become a doctor. I always told him he could do anything he could decide to do because he was a good student. He worked at McDonald's his last 2 years of high school. He could write stories, poems, etc. He was in Who's Who in High School in the 11th and 12th grades.

He dropped out of college after the first semester and wanted to decide what he wanted to do. He had his own apartment in Lexington, worked at McDonald's, had his own car and enjoyed life.

They found him shot to death in his car, holding a gun, so they decided he did it himself. We have more evidence that he didn't do it than the police have that he did.

We loved him and he loved us. He never left us without a hug and "I love you." He loved us too much to break our hearts. They are certainly broken now--We miss him more every day.

Amy, my oldest, and I have decided on an angel carving a star for Patrick's symbols. He is an angel now,

and he always wanted a star on top of the Christmas tree! He also loved Chicago Bulls!

Patrick had beautiful blue eyes and perfect teeth.



Tomorrow is my birthday and it is so hard to celebrate anything anymore without him! I miss him so!

Joe and Susan Walters' son, Ralph (10-31-88), was killed in a truck accident, 7-29-93. Susan shared her thoughts about the March newsletter:

I must put pen to paper this moment or I will get involved elsewhere. I've just finished reading the first part of your March newsletter. I just want to say how dear it has been to read what your sisters-in-law and nephews had to say about young Jim. What beautiful tributes. How that must have done your heart good. And truly our dear ones do continue to remember and love Jim and Ralph and others, but they don't often share with us. How good that you asked them to. I think for many folks who lose extended family, and for some moms and dads--that child is gone and memories remain. But for many of us, our child remains a most vital part of our lives--seen or unseen, here or there--he is every bit ours, not to be given up just because our current limitations alter perceptions. Our boys are truly ours--always and forever! And we would want no other.

I started working part time at Campbellsville University in October. (International Student Advisor)

Several nice things have happened about Ralph this year: The little chapel here has new stained glass windows in his memory, adapted by Mother from a series of crosses an artist friend in Virginia did in his memory; one of the students has written/copywrited, "Ralph's Song-An Only Son" (lyrics and music for him/us; several other things named after him.



Ralph's symbols are international children.

Sue Wilson's daughter, Taiann (11-3-79), was murdered with her boyfriend, Matt Coomer, 8-31-95. Sue wrote the following letter to Taiann:

To My Dearest Taiann,

I still have the Mother's Day card that you gave me beside my bed on the night stand. I look at it sometimes and think of all the humor and wit that you had. Mother's Day is really no harder than any other day for me because I miss you every day of the year. It does bring to mind all the thoughtful and kind things you did to show your appreciation.

People say it gets easier, but you really just learn to live with a piece of your heart gone. I look at our family portraits and say to myself--"No, this can't be true."

I just love and miss you with all my heart. Happy Mother's Day to you because if hadn't been for you, Stephen and Tanya, I wouldn't have been a Mom.

*Love,
Mom*

Sue also had an enlightening observation about Bill Cosby's grief:

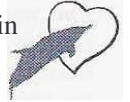
On the issue of Bill Cosby's public appearance of calm and composure-I, too, showed no grief at first due to the tremendous load of responsibility put on me to "handle" everything. I put all of my grieving energy into taking care of the funeral arrangements, going to Matthew's funeral, meeting with the media daily. Also with the law enforcement.

I really feel like I was in a deep state of shock for days and the tears and long grieving spells came later when the whole scene hit me full-force. I do not look at anyone now and expect to see true grief when they first hear the news of such a tragedy. I do think everyone is different and I just don't judge anyone for their actions, whatever they may be.

*My daughter, Tanya's idea for **MIDDLE: May I Decide - Death Lives Eternally**. I will be attending the seminar on Critical Stress Debriefing in Berea.*

*This is Crime Victim's Awareness Week (April 13-19). Tanya and I attended a 2-day seminar in Frankfort on domestic violence. We also met Fred Goldman who is now working with **Safe Street Alliance** as their spokesperson.*

Taiann's symbol is a dolphin jumping through a heart.



G.B. and Carolyn Bowman's three children, Ashley (4-23-87), Courtney (4-8-84), and Daniel (3-17-79) died from an automobile accident, 6-24-96.

The Lynn Camp Youth Basketball Program honored the Bowman family during the final night of the league tournament held on March 27 at the West Knox gymnasium.

G.B. and Carolyn were presented with a framed, color print of their three children. West Knox Elementary (where Carolyn is a teacher) was presented-with a framed charcoal print of the children that has been hung in the school lobby.

Courtney was a player in the league last year and also was named the league's queen; an honor voted on by the league's players. Several of Courtney's former teammates participated in the presentation ceremony.

The children's symbol, are angels.



Casey (1-13-84), the son of Frank and Beth Russell, died in a train accident, 6-20-94, with Adam, the son of Eddie and Janet Warnick. Beth sent information for those of you who are on the Internet:

*I wanted to let you know about a support group on the Internet. The group is called **WWANGELS** everyone there, sad to say, has lost a child, some more than one. I am a member of this group. We meet every Sunday and Wednesday*

nights to chat. You can e-mail me at BZR10@aol.com or ArtieMosk@aol.com. You will only be able to attend the chats if you are on A.O.L., but quite a bit if the support comes from e-mailing each other. We send pictures of our child or family, poems, whatever we think would help. I'm sending you other support places on the Internet. I have selfishly added Casey's homepage because I would like to share him with the world so he's never forgotten.

INTERNET GRIEF PAGES

Bereavement Research Network

<http://www.bereavement.org/>

Grief and Loss Links

<http://www.mes.net/~upchurch/grief.html>

Bill Chadwick Zoom

<http://www.premier.net/%7Ezoom/>

Virtual Memorial Garden

<http://catless.ncl.ac.uk?Obituary/memorial.html>

Bereavement Resources

<http://www.funeral.net/info/brves.html>

Our Home Page

<http://members.aol.com/fcr10/brvres.html>

Healing (Tom Goldens)

<http://www.webhealing.com>

Parmeter Family Home Page

<http://www.execulink.com/~bapar/>

All About Angels

<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/rodway/angels.htm>

Memorials

<http://www.cire.com/memorial/>

Cyberlife

<http://www.cyberlife.com/admin/640480/index.htm>

CCP Remembers

<http://www.seanet.com/users/jbrian/memorial.html>

TCF Troy MI (Bereaved parents Support)

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Plains/2882/7infolink.html>

Serenity Welcome Homepage

<http://www.inficad.com/~andya>

Grief Briefs

<http://www.metronet.com/~tlc/grfbrfs.htm>

The Bereavement Education Center

<http://www.bereavement.org/>

GriefNet

<http://rivendell.org>



Casey's symbol is a heart with "brave" written in the center.

Sharon Kidd would like to invite each of you to the following retreat:

Cleft Rock Retreat Center is a nonprofit, non-denominational organization whose goal is to strengthen individuals and families spiritually, emotionally, and relationally.

Cleft Rock is sponsoring a retreat for people who would like to learn skills to cope with personal grief and the changes that grief brings to our lives. Included in the learning experiences will be directed hiking and nature studies.

The dates and times of the retreat are from Friday, July 11, at 7:00 PM to Sunday, July 13, 2:00 PM. The cost of the retreat is \$100.00 per person. This cost covers food, lodging and materials.

It will be limited to 20 people. If you are interested in more information, call Sharon Kidd at 606-864-051 or Cathy Corey at 1-800-719-0600. If you would like to send in a reservation for the weekend, please send check to:

Cleft Rock Retreat Center
Rt. 1, Box 400
Mt. Vernon, KY 40456

Designate: **Dealing with Grief Retreat.**

Jason (2-10-74), son of Ralph and Ruth Latham, died when a wall fell on him, 3-13-95. Ruth shares her thoughts on Mother's Day:

As for Mother's Day, I would rather just skip that day. It will never be the same for me. A big part of me is just gone. Gone forever. It is such a painful more aware of Jason's absence, if that is possible.

The MIDDLE sounds like a more attainable goal for me. I pray I can find it.

I seem to be consumed with Jason's death. Even though most of the time I still can't believe it is so. It is always on my mind. I can't seem to get past it. All I can think of is that he's gone. I go to bed with it. I wake up with it. The crash wakes me up. I see it over and over in my mind and I wasn't even there. People say, "You have good memories," but those memories only make me sad and remind me of what I don't have anymore. It's the neverness that is so hard to bear.

In some ways, I guess I'm better. I'm not the walking zombie I once was, but the pain of missing Jason seems to be worse. I take one step forward and two back I am so tired all of the time, and it scares me to be so out of control of myself. This has taken so much out of me. I feel so helpless. I wish there was something I could do. (These are natural and "normal" feelings of grief)

I have a new grandson. He has helped me, but even this wonderful birth has been bitter-sweet. Jason will never know his sister's baby, his nephew and namesake. This is so hard for me to bear. He would have loved Tristan Troy so. I feel Jason has been cheated of so many things. It break, my heart. The baby reminds me of Jason. He's a very loving baby. I know people think I "should be over this" or at least a lot better. I loved and nurtured Jason for 21 years and I will never be "over" losing him. I struggle every day. Some are worse than others, but it is always there, hanging over me like a thick, dark cloud My only comfort is in knowing I'll see Jason again some sweet day. Even that doesn't keep me from missing him so very much, NOW. I keep reminding myself of the verse in Psalms that says "God is close to the brokenhearted" I know that He is or else we could not live through such unbearable pain and agony. And even when I don't understand, I have to believe my God is merciful and in control.

I found this prayer in a book written by Verdell Davis:

"Lord, believing isn't easy when I'm hurting or confused, and You are silent for so long.

And when I do believe, it's most often not with all of me.

Like Thomas, I have to be shown over and over again, not only the wounds in Your hands and side, but proof that You love me.

Oh, Divine LORD, help me to look beyond my wishes for peace and comfort, beyond my doubts and unanswered questions, to the tear in Your eye as You carry the pain too heavy for me to bear."

AMEN

One thing I have found to be quite strange and that it is that I can talk about it, I can write about it, but I cannot think about it. I miss Jason so much.

We put this in the local paper in memory of Jason. March 13, was the second anniversary of his death.

It's been two years since you went away.

We love and miss you all the time. This mountain so hard we're left to climb.

Precious brother and beloved son.

We'll meet you there when our time has come.

Dad, Mom, Lori, Neysa, Stacy, and Tristan Troy

I recently wrote this after seeing a shooting star:

Like a shooting star.

You lit up our lives for a short time. Then, you went afar.

We miss your bright smile, Oh! How your eyes would shine.

Now, you shine in that heavenly land. And someday we'll be there, too. Serenaded by angels, holding Jesus' hand.

You'll be there to greet us, Jesus and you.

In loving memory of my beloved son, Jason Troy Latham.

I have this great fear now of it happening to my daughters, my husband,

grandson, or someone else close to me. I know now the worst possible thing can happen. I hope I can find a MIDDLE ground and once again find as my heart.



Jason's symbols are a boy angel and a UK wildcat emblem.



Doug (3-5-64), son of Gene and Jean Gilvin, died from a brain tumor, 2-10-95. Jean encourages each of you in the Lexington-Georgetown area to participate:

*Our son, Douglas Gilvin, died from a brain tumor. The battle against cancer goes on and we are committed to doing something to help fight this killer disease. We will be lighting a candle in his name and participating in a community wide event called **Relay For Life**, sponsored by **the American Cancer Society**. **Relay For Life** is a nationwide event being held on May 16-17, to raise funds for critical cancer research and cancer patient services all targeted to eliminate the incidence morbidity and mortality of this dreaded disease.*

We will be sponsoring a team called In Memory of Douglas Gilvin from 7:00 PM on Friday, May 16th through 7:00 AM, Saturday, May 17th. Members of our team will rotate shifts of walking and running our hearts out against cancer, on the Kenton Field Track at Georgetown College in Georgetown, supported by as many gifts and individuals as possible. We invite you to be a part of that support team.

Please be advised that your help is greatly appreciated. You may telephone Jean at 502-863-2535.



Doug was a policeman in Lexington.

David and Cindy Jo Greever's daughter, Michelle (8-24-84), died 11-5-93. Cindy Jo gave her impressions of Bill Cosby and MIDDLE:

I believe that Bill Cosby will come out of this deep shock and deal with the full blown affects of his deep grief eventually and when he does, this side of him will also be publicly displayed.

Perhaps at that point it may even become newsworthy to "explain" how when one is in shock, they appear to be strong and handling it well but, in fact, when the shock wears away, they are left with the raw pain. Bereavement for parents is something that lasts a lifetime and through the years, people will be made aware as Bill will undoubtedly comment how he will never get over it though he obviously gets on with his life. In the meantime, his wife, Camille, is certainly displaying her grief and it can be seen by the general public that she is NOT handling this as well as Bill appears to be. This, too, is another typical scenario with couples where one seems to hold back and the other lets it out. So that maybe, much will be learned of the bereavement process for parents through the general media since Bill is such a well known and loved personality.

I would like to say that I will always be Michelle's PROUD mother and though Mother's day will never be the same for me since her parting 3 1/2 years ago. I live to honor and treasure her life that was bestowed upon me by God for those nine short years. I wouldn't trade them for anything in the world. To have known Michelle, to have been her Mother and to have loved her all her days, makes it all worth it, no matter what has happened and I will be her proud Mother forever...

I have some ideas for defining MIDDLE:

Moms Irreversible Devotion, Dad's Love Eternal

Middle Involves Deep Decision, Letting-go Eventually

Mom's Including Dad's Devotion Loving Eternally

May In Devotion Darkness Lighten Evermore

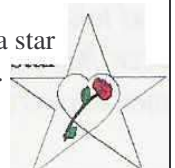
Middle Is Devoting Dedicated Lifetime Experiences

Middle Is Doing Dedicated Lifetime Efforts

Middle Is Devotedly Dealing with Lifetime Experiences

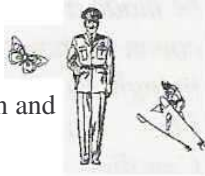
Middle Initiates Deep Discernment Leaving Endurance

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



Gary and Viola Correll's son, Michael (8-18-79), was killed in an electrical shock-drowning 8-9-95. The Correll's have a new baby boy-Bradley Dean, born March 1, 1997, and he weighed 7lbs. and 8oz. Bradley has Michael as his guardian angel.

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



The following article, written by Erma Bombeck, was sent to me by a fellow traveler:

If you are looking for an answer this Mother's Day on why God reclaimed your child, I don't know.

I only know that thousands of mothers out there today desperately need an answer as to why they were permitted to go through the elation of carrying a child and then lose it to miscarriage, accident, violence, disease or drugs.

Motherhood isn't just a series of contractions; it's a state of mind. From the moment we know life is inside us, we feel a responsibility to protect and defend that human being. It's a promise we can't keep.

We beat ourselves to death over that pledge. "If I hadn't worked through the eighth month." "If I had taken him to the doctor when he had a fever." "If I hadn't let him use the car that night." "If I hadn't been so naive, I'd have noticed he was on drugs."

The longer I live the more convinced I become that surviving changes us. After the bitterness, the anger, the guilt and the despair are tempered by time, we look at life differently.

*While I was writing my book **I Want to Grow Hair. I Want to Grow up. I Want to Go to Boise**, I talked with mothers who had lost a child to cancer. Every single one said that death gave their lives new meaning and purpose. And who do you think prepared them for the rough, lonely road they had to travel? Their dying child. They pointed their mothers toward the future and told them to keep going. The children had already accepted what their mothers were fighting to reject.*

The children in the bombed-out nursery in Oklahoma City have touched more lives than they will ever know. Workers who had probably given their kids a mechanical pat on the head without thinking that morning, were making calls home during the day to their children to say, "I love you."

This might seem like a strange Mother's Day column on a day when joy and life abound for the millions of mothers throughout the country. But it's also a day of appreciation and respect. I can think of no mothers who deserve it more than those who had to give a child back.

In the face of adversity, we are not permitted to ask, "Why me?" You can ask, but you won't get an answer. Maybe you are the instrument who is left behind to perpetuate the life that was lost and appreciate the time you had with it.

The late Gilda Radner summed it up pretty well, "I wanted a perfect ending. Now I've learned the hard way that some poems don't rhyme and some stories don't have a clear beginning, middle and end. Life is about not knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the best of it, without knowing what is going to happen next. Delicious ambiguity."

This month is a month of graduations; grade school, high school, college, technical school. If your son or daughter would have graduated this year, I hope you will encourage their class to remember them in some way. Perhaps they can wear a special ribbon or even put a paragraph about your child in the graduation program. Don't be afraid to ask others to remember your child. It is up to you!

Jim and Judy Rose's son, Scott (2-19-63), was killed in an automobile accident, 7-4-83. Judy collects clowns and gave me the following poem that is framed and hanging in their home:

The Clown's Prayer

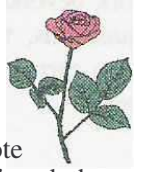
*As I stumble through this life,
Help me to create more laughter than
tears,*

*Dispense more happiness than gloom
Spread more cheer than despair.*

*Never let me become so indifferent
That I will jail to see the wonder
In the eyes of a child
Or the twinkle in the eyes of the aged*

*Never let me forget that my total effort
Is to cheer people, make them happy
And forget momentarily all the
unpleasantness
In their lives.*

*And, in my final moment,
May I hear You whisper:
When you made people smile,
You made Me smile.*



Scott's symbol is a rose.

Mamie McCullough wrote **Mama's Rules for Livin'** and there are many challenging statements:

Get rid of the "yeah, buts." If you don't know how to do something--START.

People don't plan to fail--they fail to plan. Goals are dreams with deadlines.

It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare. It is because we do not dare that things are difficult.

It isn't the load that weighs you down--it's the way you carry it.

I can do everything through Him who gives me strength. Phil. 4:13.

A person wrapped up in himself makes a very small package.

When you become a parent remember: Children are sent through us--not to us..

Talking is sharing. Listening is caring.

You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.

Faith is seeing a rainbow in each tear.

Moving on is far more productive than hanging on.

We hope each one of you will be able to come to the picnic. When you come, be prepared to be surrounded by hugs, love, hope and chocolate!!



