

# LAMENTATIONS

Issue 58

MIDDLE

July, 1997

Friday, July 4th, is **Independence Day**-- a day of **Liberation**. *Liberation* means a movement seeking equal rights and status for a group (fellow travelers). Since the deaths of children, we feel that we are in bondage and have been stripped of our rights of *life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness*. The loss we are experiencing, since our child's life, has been taken from us reminds me of the many wars our country has fought to protect our freedom. But who is to protect our family? We always thought as parents that we were capable of doing that, but we now know that there is no protection from death.

So we are reminded again and again that we cannot change this tragic event, but we still have the right to find *liberty* and the *pursuit of happiness*, to find liberty in the MIDDLE. We will never totally be liberated from the grief of the loss of our loved one, and we don't want that total liberation because that would mean that they are no longer a part of us... but we do want liberation from the excruciating pain of the loss of their physical presence.

In finding some liberty from our grief, we find that our priorities have changed, our interests have changed, and our future goals have changed. We now value each day and I now try to do something each day that will help someone else, or will encourage people to remember Young Jim. You would be amazed how often I think of each of you when I see the symbols

you have chosen for your children. That helps to keep their memory alive.

On this 4th of July, I hope you will light a firecracker and let it symbolize your grief. Don't stick your fingers in your ears so you won't hear the noise; hold your head high and not only listen to it's thunderous sound, but watch it as it releases it's power and strength and let it be a symbol of releasing some of your grief, anger and frustration. It may take many firecrackers to make you feel better. If the firecrackers don't work, use bottle rockets.

The *pursuit of happiness* is more difficult. To *pursue* means to find or employ measures to obtain or accomplish. Soon after Young Jim's death, I found happiness in small things... a beautiful sunset, a rainbow, a butterfly, seeing my husband smile, having a friend share their memories of Young Jim. I now find happiness in the smiles of our "greats," watching families enjoy each other, reading books of how people have overcome great tragedies, and writing this newsletter. Does that sound strange that I find happiness in writing to others who understand my loss? You have brought me great happiness by allowing me to share Young Jim with you and allowing me to express my grief and being accepting of how I feel. You do not judge me like so many of those who don't understand our loss. I am encouraged by your letters of hope and can see myself and you progressing through the different stages of grief. We will

find our MIDDLE on our own time and in our own way. Our MIDDLE is our MIDDLE and no one else will probably have the same MIDDLE. But in our own middle we will find comfort and the possibility of tomorrow.

I read in some book on grief that because of our great loss, there will never be another person who can take that loved one's place, but I feel that we can be open to having others enter our lives. When we all gathered for J.I.M.'s Picnic, June 7, I felt the "fullness" of having people entering my life. As Charlie Walton spoke, I truly felt that we were each taking a shovel full of grief from each other. By the end of the day, I felt that my *mountain of grief* was going to be one that I can not only climb up but can climb over to the other side. We are all at different stages of our grief. By being together, we realize that some of us are farther along than others, but it shows us that we can do it because we see our fellow travelers doing it. We can help each other because we understand each other.

Try to spend your time remembering the good times. Don't punish and torment yourself with the thoughts of "What might have been," "Could have been," "Should have been." We cannot change these, but we can change our thoughts so we will remember the good memories and the blessing of having them as long as we did. As Robert Schuller says: **If it is going to be, it is up to me!**

## Grief Grafts

July 26<sup>th</sup> is Young Jim's birthday. He would have been 25. I am still shocked to think that by the age of 18, he not only had a birth date, but also a death date. Permit me to share with you, my family in grief, the dedication written by Wayne Perkins (our unofficial guru of MIDDLE) at the opening of his new horse arena last October:

*Tonight I would like to take this time, the first event in the 3R Arena, to remember my friend, my cousin, and my best buddy, Jim Taylor.*

*As many of you know, Jim was killed in an automobile accident while going to the farm on Redbird Road, May 20, 1991.*

*It is much too painful for me to read this aloud without Jim to share in this night and the nights to follow. Jim was a big part of 3R Quarter Horses and will always be with us in memory and the deepest part of my heart.*

*The riderless horse, Benitos Pearl, was Jim's favorite and Jim was the first to rope on him. I never look at "Big Un," as he is known to many, without thinking of Jim on his back, grinning and ready to rope.*

*So tonight, I want to express my thanks to my Aunt Dinah and Uncle Jim for letting me share their little boy as my traveling companion, my surrogate son, and most of all, my best friend. The display case containing Jim's rope and spurs will always serve as a reminder to honor those who have gone before and dared to simply do it. He'll go through that entry gate again.*

Thanks,  
Wayne



Jaci (4-10-84), 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. Gail writes:

*I've been busy preparing for the bike programs. One is set for May 31, and*

*the other is June 7 (we Can't make the picnic and we really wanted to).*

*Enclosed is what I've been up to lately. **The Gift of Life Agency** asked me in March to help them promote National Donor Month (April). It was hard to do it, but I'm glad to help a good agency like that. My next door neighbor's little 1 1/2 year old is waiting for a liver, and my own father is hoping to hear from Pittsburgh's Transplant Center about a lung transplant, so you can see how near and dear this is to me, too!*

Dear Editor,

*June 7, 1997, was a typical, lovely summer day. It was warm outside, with blue skies, green grass, and flowers blooming. It was the city that shattered our lives forever.*

*It was the day our beautiful daughter, Jaclyn, was hit on her bicycle and died in my arms approximately 10 hours later after being airlifted to a trauma center from our local hospital.*

*I never imagined that one day I would be sitting in a hospital facing the fact that my little girl was going to die. Not in my wildest nightmares would I have thought that our family would be approached about donating Jaci's organs and tissue.*

*Through my tears and breaking heart, I found the courage to say "yes" to donation. I knew it was the right thing to do. I selfishly wanted part of Jaci to still be here on earth with us.*

*Organ donation is a way for us to leave behind a lasting legacy, to offer the Gift of Life to another. Jaci's gift gave life to someone needing heart valve replacement, and her corneas went to two women who now can see their own families.*

*I know that every day these families are thanking Jaci in their prayers. Jaci's life was not in vain. She remains in my heart forever, and in death, she did a great service to others. I know this is what she would have wanted.*

*Today, nearly 2,000 Michigan patients are waiting for an organ transplant. We are proud that we had a chance to help some of these people. My family found that by becoming a donor family, our healing process was a little easier. We take great comfort in knowing that Jaci lives on in others.*

*People try so hard with other memorials and attempts to see that their loved ones are not forgotten. I know I do with the bike safety program and the memorial scholarship fund, but I can find no other more honorable way than through the Gift of Life.*

*If heroes save lives, Jaci was a little hero. What better legacy can we leave in this world than being remembered as being a giver of life.*

*Please consider being that kind of hero by getting more information on organ and tissue donations or having it be known on your driver's license.*



Jaci's symbol is Mickey Mouse.

Michael Stratton, (4-25-60) the son of Marc and Betty Jo, died as a result of cancer, 8-13-95. Betty Jo tells us about Michael:

*I am sending a copy of the poem I wrote and had printed in our local paper on the first anniversary of Michael's leaving.*

*I have selected the top hat, cane and dove for his symbols. He was a magician and ventriloquist since he was 9 years old. Everyone said he had a great stage presence.*

*In high school drama, he was in all of the plays and musicals. He played the part of the Mikado in "The Mikado." He had a good singing voice. He also sang in church. He was in the marching band, concert band and chorus in high school and Murray State University's marching band. He played the trumpet. He also played the piano and was learning to play the guitar.*

*Michael had a quiet nature and always seemed to have wisdom and a vocabulary beyond his years, even when he was very young.*

**In Memory of  
Michael Shayne Stratton  
4-25-60 8-13-95**

*You were taken from us  
A year ago  
It seems like only yesterday  
We let you go.*

*Although you had been married 14 years*

*And had a son of your own  
We see you as a little boy  
Catching lightening bugs at home.*

*You said that you were convinced  
You were put here to entertain  
A lot of people both young and old  
Enjoyed your magic and  
Ventriloquism show.*

*"Whatever will be, will be, " you said  
If it was your time  
You had a better show  
A better place to go  
You wanted no one to cry  
We tried not to do so.*

*The night you left us, you hugged your  
wife  
And said that you were in a beautiful  
place  
Save us a spot in that beautiful place  
So that we can be with you again  
When we come home.*

*We Love You and Miss You,  
Your Family*



Michael's symbols are a top hat, cane and a dove.

Luciana (1-20-79), the daughter of Lucia and Skip Bayne, was accidentally shot 4-30-94. Lucia shares her testimony about forgiveness:

*Trying to get in the spirit to talk about Lulu. This is the beginning of the month that I feel the most sadness. To me, anniversaries and birthdays are the worst. Christmas and other holidays don't bother me as much.*

*Well, I want to talk about forgiveness, because it is not something easy to do especially forgive someone that has taken a child's life.*

*Luciana was a very pretty and popular teenager. Always smiling, never mad or with a frown on her face. She was a happy girl and my best friend too. We used to go shopping and eat out together very often. She was also my big helper around the house, and with the kids at that time 4 and 5 years old*

*Luciana loved to talk on the phone, loved dancing, had many friends, was always very popular at school, and had a lot of friends and a boyfriend she*

*loved the most; at least she thought she loved him...*

*That night, Luciana was grounded because she got home late from school, I told her not to go out. I went to work and she disobeyed me and went out. I believe she made a wrong choice. Then she went to a friend's house with 6 other teenagers, which I believe was another wrong choice. She was in the wrong place at the wrong time.*

*The boy had a gun and began to play with it. It was unloaded, but after a few minutes he decided to put bullets in it and pulled the trigger at random. Among 7 kids, it happened to hit Luciana. It hit her heart, lungs, liver and one kidney. By the time 911 was called, she was already dead. She died in less than five minutes. When I was notified, she had already died. No time for "good-byes," no time to say "I love you "for the last time. I was devastated and very angry.*

*Angry at her for disobeying me and for being at that place, angry at the boy that killed her and angry at God. How could He let this happen to my girl??? Where was He?*

*For 3 months I had a miserable life, not eating, sleeping or talking with anybody. Just crying day and night.*

*I was destroying my relationship with my husband and my little ones, but I didn't care!*

*One day someone brought me a book **When God Doesn't Make Sense** by Dr. James Dobson and another book, **Gift of Forgiveness** by Dr. Charles Stanley. I read them in less than a week and realized that I was the only one that could change my thinking, That day I made a decision. I was not going to have a miserable life any longer. I decided to give all my burdens to the Lord Jesus Christ. First of all, I began to ask God to change my heart, to help me to find peace in the midst of my circumstances and to heal my broken heart, I had friends praying for me and with me constantly and it helped a lot. Prayers really make a difference! We prayed the most for the boy and 8 months later I received a beautiful letter from Tyler that made me cry. He was asking me to forgive him! At that moment, I realized that I didn't hate him anymore. God had worked in my heart. I stand here today to say, with all honesty, I could not forgive him in my own strength (it is impossible for a*

*mother to forgive someone that killed her child) but through my heavenly Father it was possible and I forgave him. I trusted God would take care of the situation and He did. On the day of the trial, the judge asked me what penalty would satisfy me. Tyler could be sentenced for maybe 9 years in prison, and I told the judge I didn't want him to be in jail for any longer than one year, because he is not a criminal, so jail wouldn't do any good for him. Neither would it bring my daughter back. But I agreed he needed to be accountable for his actions and have some consequences for what had happened*

*God forgives us for our sins, but when we do sin against Him, we have to bear the consequences. So I was trying to apply what I learned from God's word. The Bible also teaches us that when God forgives us He remembers no more. So, I made a decision to forgive Tyler and remember the accident no more. I don't allow my mind to dwell on the circumstances of that day. I forget that day. I died also on that day. I am a new person, totally different from the old Lucia I was before and I treasure all the wonderful memories I have from Luciana. I understood **FORGIVENESS IS NOT BASED ON FEELINGS. FORGIVENESS IS A DECISION WE HAVE TO MAKE.***

*At the end of the trial, I felt the Holy Spirit leading me to talk with Tyler. I didn't want to. But that small voice of God told me again to go. Without time to think about it, I found myself sitting next to him and my arms around his shoulders. He was looking down to the floor and didn't face me. I told him my daughter is in heaven and we will see her again. I told him I forgave him deep in my heart, because the love of Christ in me allowed me to do so. I told him Jesus loves him and He is just waiting for you to come and accept His forgiveness. I promised him to pray for him every day the entire time he would be in jail and I did. He got out in 7 months for excellent behavior and also was elected the valedictorian in his class in a Program that helps youth to overcome behavior problems and drug and alcohol abuse. He stood in front of hundreds of teenagers struggling to*

overcome mistakes they made in their lives and said: "I am here to talk about hope and a second chance," He was referring to my forgiveness towards him, Yes, I agree with that statement. We all fall short of the glory of God. I am a sinner and I need forgiveness from God every day of my life. Why not give this boy the hope and the second chance he is asking for? Who am I to hold the forgiveness he is asking for? No, I couldn't keep the anger in my heart anymore... I can just thank God for the transformation He did in my heart.

Today, 3 years later, I see how much God has blessed me because I was faithful to His commandment, gave Him my burdens and He worked it His way and in His time. My heart is healed I do have peace in my mind and joy in my heart because I made the right choice to forgive someone that had wronged me and God honored my Prayers.

Last time I heard from Tyler, he is doing well, working, going to college. He plans to be Youth Counselor and I pray the Lord for that. I can honestly say that my daughter did not die in vain. Something good came out of this tragedy and I give all the glory to God

My husband, my kids and I still struggle with our loss. We miss her very much; more than ever. But we don't grieve like the ones that have no hope because we know we will see her again. It is just a matter of time and we will be together forever, Meanwhile, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. He is worthy to be praised.

Luciana's symbols are angels.



Jim and June Brown's son, Aaron (2-17-83), died from an accidental shooting 1-8-96. June lamented about 1996 being such a tragic year for her and her family, She also shared the death of her father:

The year of 1996 has been one of the worst years of my whole life, NOT only did my 12-year-old child die in January, my uncle was severely burned in a house fire and had to be in the Intensive care unit for at least five

months. Then, on the 4th day of February, we found out that our Father had lung cancer!!!

He was living in Middletown, Ohio and came back to see his brother that was in the hospital needing open heart surgery!!!

The doctors at Morehead sent him to Lexington at the Central Baptist Hospital for the surgery. At this same time, Dad was worried about having the flu bug or something he couldn't get rid of, so my brother wanted me to get him an appointment with Dr. Maddox (I work in the Pharmacy for his son) beside the clinic. As soon as Doc took x-rays, he knew that Dad was in bad shape, Aaron died January 8th, then my uncle got 3rd degree burns on the last day of January, He was my Mother's brother (she died in 1976). I really don't know how I managed to keep my sanity during all of this, We had to start taking Dad to the Markey Cancer Center in Lexington too!!

But you know, I made it!!!

On April 27th at about 5:00 in the morning, my Dad died, holding my hand with my brother's arms around him at my home. That's the way he wanted to die, he didn't want to go back to the hospital. He said he wanted to stay with my brother when he first found out about being so sick and wanted to stay with me when he got bad. The morning he died, I went in the bedroom to check on him and he came right up out of the bed and said "There's my Angel." I went and called Hospice and my brother and when I got back to him, I knew he was really bad. I got up in the bed with him and asked him if he wanted to pray. We prayed and then I went and called our minister and the ambulance and went back to Dad and I asked him if he wanted to pray some more and we did. The last time I went in the bedroom and we prayed, he said he could see my son, Aaron. My brother and our minister got there at the same time. When Rev. Spencer asked him if he needed to pray, he said, "Don't need to." My brother sat down and put his arms around him and I was holding his hand and we were praying and he looked like he went to sleep; he was so peaceful. Later on in the morning, I went into Aaron's room and turned his VCR off. It had been on since the night he died.

So Dinah, I asked myself, "How does one go on living in a world

where there's none of your family left and there's so much pain?????"

I know now that it's my faith that I have in GOD because of what He has pulled me through. So now when I can't stand all of the pain, I pray a little harder because I know that some day I will be with my darling son and the rest of my family.

On the anniversary of Dad's death, I did Aaron's room. I think the hardest thing for me was taking down his posters. He loved those poster. I then knew that he wouldn't be coming back...

I have been doing crafts and sewing to keep myself busy and working 45 hours a week. At Christmas I made an angel doll with Aaron's birthstone in its ears. She was beautiful. I had angels on Aaron's stone and I keep them sitting on the base, I found one fishing so I want to add angels to his symbols.

PS Chocolate is also my weakness too!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



Aaron's symbols are a sunshine, a heart with wings, a bass fish and an angel.

Tina Cooper and Larry Tackett's daughter, Latisha (11-1-92), died 8-1-88, Tina tells us about Latisha:

Latisha died very unexpectedly. She hadn't been sick all winter. On Sunday, March 23, 1997, Latish got a headache about 5:00 that evening. Two hours later, she got sick to her stomach and then slept until 12:20 am. She woke up delirious and died at 6:20 am, It was a very big shock She was an angel. She loved everyone and everyone loved her. She was the sunshine of my day, always. She always had a smile, Always! She will always be missed. I feel so empty without her. I'll never forget her pretty blonde hair, beautiful blue eyes and her smile. This is my own peace of mind, knowing she is my guardian angel. She was an angel for sure.



Latisha's symbol is a guardian angel.

Josh Bowlin (2-14-79) died in a fire, 2-6-97. His mother, Marilyn, in her first sentence, expresses how we all feel when we meet fellow travelers:

*It's hard to begin a letter to a stranger; in a way we're not. We've been through the same thing. We've each lost a child When it first happened, I never would have dreamed it. It was like a nightmare and I could not wake. As each day goes by, I realize that I can make it. I never knew how strong a person I was until I had to say that final good-by to Josh.*

*I'll tell you about Josh. He was born on February 14, 1979, at 2:30 am. He weighed 4lb. 60z. and was 16" long. How tiny he was. The first time I held him, I knew he was very special. He had a speech problem. When other children teased him, he would become very upset. Children don't know what they are doing when they're young.*

*As he became older, the speech problem became clearer, but it never went completely away.*

*When Josh walked into a room, it lit up the room from the smile on his face and the twinkle in his eyes.*

*Josh loved people and animals. He couldn't stand to see any person or animal be mistreated.*

*Two weeks before he died, my sister's dog was hit by a car. Josh laid down on the puppy, screaming, crying and praying for it to live. It was very cold on that day in January. He spent four hours digging the puppy's grave. He didn't take a break. No one knew at that time that in two weeks, someone would be digging Josh's grave.*

*I always thought that parents were to go first. I know now that God needs the young as well as the old.*

*I do know one thing, death has no favorites. When it strikes, it's not choosy; black, white, rich or poor. We all have something in common, our children. I lived I wish it had been me the night my baby boy died.*

*Now I am a fellow traveler.*

Marilyn has not chosen a symbol for Josh yet.

David and Lola's daughter, Jennifer Daugherty (6-7-77), was killed

in an automobile accident; 12-25-95. Lola shares the same feelings we all have:

*Until now, I have been unable to write anything about my Jennifer. There has been no joy in my life since I lost her and there will never be any true joy for me again.*

*I have learned how to get up every morning and go through the motions of a "normal" life. The last fifteen months have been torture for me and David. For a while I almost lost myself. Jennifer was my only reason for living for so many years. I am trying to learn to exist now for myself and my husband.*

*My first waking thought and my last waking thoughts are of Jennifer and how much I miss and need her. I pray daily for God to give me some measure of peace.*

*Jennifer was such a light in my life. Her laughter and sense of humor were her gifts to the world She was a natural comedienne. She also loved art and was very talented at painting still life.*

*I have received so many cards and letters from friends of hers who tell me about her kindness and loving ways. Things that make me realize all the more that she was a very special gift.*

*As a small child, Jen was a very happy, contented child When I was ill, she became the mother and would try to take care of me. She once gave me three does of Niquil while I was groggy, thinking that more medicine would make me better. I slept for 24 hours. She used to laugh about this, saying she just wanted me to sleep.*

*She was a good child, and a wonderful person. As a teenager, she would help younger children with their homework.*

*Our next-door neighbor told me how Jennifer helped her daughter with her Algebra. I never knew this while Jen was alive.*

*I miss her so very much. The support of my sister, Jo Ann, is what helps me to keep going.*

Jennifer's symbols are a red rose, the peace symbol and a smiley face.



Robby (9-27-82) is the son of Bobby and Brenda White. He died in a bus accident, 10-18-96. Brenda shares the family's memories:

*Robert Matthew White was a special gift. He was born 9-27-82. He was the baby and the only boy of our three children. His sisters are 9 and 6 years older than he. After the girls had started to school, I just wanted one more baby to hold. It just seemed like they had grown up so fast. I didn't really care if the baby was a boy or girl, but I had wanted to know what it was like to have a boy. When he was born, we all were so happy. We were glad we would get to see what it would be like to have a boy.*

*Robby was all boy. He played baseball and loved it, we all did His dad was his coach for the last three years, but Robby had played since he was seven years old. He had also played basketball that long and he lifted weights. He learned to swim at age 4 and wanted to be a lifeguard like his sister when he turned 15.*

*He took a hunter safety class at age 9 and enjoyed hunting and fishing. His father and I took the hunter safety class with him. I was the only girl, but Robby thought I was a neat Mom.*

*We enjoyed weekends on our boat and Robby like to water ski. If Robby had to stay in the house, he liked to draw. He won an art award at the public library one time.*

*He was in the school band and played the drums. He also talked us into buying him a large drum set so he could be in a band later when he would be older.*

*Once he was in middle school, he played football and wrestled His school retired his football jersey #8; framed one for us and then placed one by the gym door.*

*He came in second place in a wrestling tournament and won a silver medal. His coach was always saying he would be a state champion when he gets older, so that became Robby's goal. He couldn't wait for wrestling this year. It started the Monday after he was killed.*

*He collected baseball cards and knives. He liked to go skating and was very good at it. He played his guitar in the talent show at school.*

I worked at the elementary school he went to and they were they best years of my life. He loved having friends over to play pool and now it is so quiet around the pool table.

The thing that he loved the most was riding his dirt bike. He also liked to ride the three-wheeler and go-cart.

He loved snow days because all the boys would get together and ride their four-wheelers and three-wheelers. Robby just loved life and wanted to try everything. He loved all animals and I guess we have had just about everything; fish, a bird, a rabbit, gerbils, a turtle, dogs and cats. He wanted to be a Veterinarian when he grew up.

His favorite food was pizza. Every night I would ask, "What do you think we should have for supper?" He would always smile and say, "pizza."

I miss his smiling face very much. Robby loved people, he was good to all, young and old. The little kids loved him and wanted to come to our house. He would give his snack money to other kids so they could buy lunch. He worried if the other kids didn't have lunch money.

One mother of a boy on his baseball team said all the other boys would pick on her son and Robby would make them leave him alone. Robby has always looked out for kids that were smaller or being picked on.

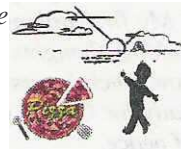
Another lady, about 70 years old, said Robby would come talk to her. She said he spent about 3 hours talking with her the Monday before he was killed.

He was also the family clown. One night at a pizza place, there was a hole in the wall so he put his finger in it and acted like something had a hold of it. He fell down and screamed. I just knew he would offend someone, but I looked around and everyone was laughing. We thought he might grow up to be another Ace Ventura.

I guess I'm trying to say Robby made our lives complete. He made the world a better place. Now the biggest joy of our lives is gone and it's hard to wake up and face another day without him.

Robby was hit and killed while getting off the school bus, October 18, 1996. The bus driver let him off on another road facing our house. She was a substitute driver and said she didn't

know she was to pull out before letting him off. She also said she was talking to the other children and didn't see the truck coming or Robby crossing the road. She pulled so far down on Witty Lane that she kept Robby from seeing down Princeton Road. He was trying to cross two lanes of traffic to get home. He was hit as soon as he stepped out to look. He had just turned fourteen. On his head stone, I'm going to have engraved "A little child shall lead them." I feel like God gave me that to comfort me. I would like Robby's symbol to be a child walking off in the sunset. I know if you could ask Robby what he would want it to be he would say, "A pizza." So maybe we should have them both..



Robby's coaches and teammates wrote the following poem:

Life is precious  
The most precious jewel of all.  
No matter the size,  
Whether big or small.

Why is it that the best  
Ones are the first to go?  
It's because these are  
The ones that touch our hearts so!

Robby White was one,  
And this is the truth to say.  
He touched our hearts in  
Each and every way.

Everyone asks,  
"Why this one?"  
It's because his deed on  
Earth was finally done,

It doesn't seem fair that  
He had to leave.  
He's in a better place now,  
This we must believe.

He was a great young man  
Blessed from the start.  
Soon we will join him again,  
And NEVER be apart.

We love you, Robby!

Art and Eleanor Foss' son, John (5-2-65), died from bladder cancer, 10-5-93. On the anniversary of Young Jim's death, Eleanor wrote the most consoling and complimentary note:

So much pain to remember, so much more if we forget.

I wish we had known Young Jim, and yet I think we do.

(Her note proves that when we have a symbol for our children, and when we share them with others, our children are not forgotten.)

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



Luke (9-18-78), son of Nim and Clara Patterson, died from an accidental gunshot, 9-12-94. Clara shared her observations of J.I.M.'s Picnic and Luke's graduation:

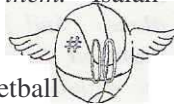
We wanted to let you know how very much we enjoyed J.I.M.'s picnic. As last year, we felt that we were in like surroundings for a change. It seems that no matter how long the time, we just can't seem to get people to understand how we feel. Charlie Walton was great! His books really tell it like it is. He truly understands and can put all our feelings into words.

This year, Luke would have graduated from high school. Our friends just could not understand why we did not go to the graduation. For us, it was not the "thing to do." I could not imagine sitting in the audience and watching Luke's class graduate without him. We did go to senior night to present Luke's scholarship and I honestly believe this was one of the hardest things we had done in a long time. I had written out a few things we wanted to say, and as Nim expected, I could not read it. We wanted Luke's friends to know how proud he was of his school and that we did not choose the scholarship, we could never make that choice. A dear friend rescued us from the task and read the short speech for us. Poor Phil had to stop and compose himself at one point. These were Luke's friends and they were missing his presence also. When the speaker finished, the whole room was on their feet applauding and

crying. I suppose it stirred the emotions even more when they called the name of the recipient and he was a very dear friend of Luke's.

I was happy to hear that they honored Luke during the graduation. In the program, the graduation was dedicated to Luke. The graduating class sat on all red chairs and the chair where Luke would have sat was white with a bouquet of red roses laying in the seat. It was very special for us to know how much his class wanted to keep him with them. I did order a video of the graduation, when Nim and I think we are ready, we will sit down and watch it. I have to honor Luke's graduating class. Each year since we lost Luke, there has been something in the annual about him. The school puts an insert in the local newspaper once a month, and in the class recalling their four years at Corbin High School, they mentioned how the hardest thing they had to do was go through the loss of their friend, Luke.

As I have told you before, the children have been great to us. They have tried to keep Luke's memory alive, and keep him a part of his high school all four years. I wonder why adults can not see how smart these children are and maybe learn from them. We hear about the one percent of the children that are bad, but we never hear about that ninety nine percent of the children that are good. I think the Bible states my point exactly when it says; "...And a little child shall lead them." Isaiah 11:6b.



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

Jeff (10-2-71), son of Lonnie and Janice Stewart, was killed in a dune buggy accident, 6-9-94. Janice shares her views of the picnic:

The picnic Saturday was great although it was raining. We enjoyed meeting other people like us. Luther and Rosemary Smith are really great people. It is a joy to know people like them. I bought both of Charlie's books. I could have listened to him talk longer. My husband and I both enjoyed him a great deal.

Jeff's symbols are a star and A cowboy boots.



Doug (3-5-64), son of Gene and Jean Gilvin, died from a brain tumor, 2-10-95. Jean gives us an update on the **Relay for Life Cancer Drive:**

We raised \$8,776 the night of the Relay for Life. We have had \$595 added since then so our team had \$9,371. We won for the most money raised by a team and also got the Best Spirit Award for Scott County. Gene and I raised over \$7,000 ourselves. Doug had a lot of friends. Several from the Lexington Police Department came down and walked and the color guard from the Police Department lighted the luminaries. They also had T-shirts with a big badge and Doug's number 41 on it and in big letters **In Memory of Doug Gilvin** our team shirts were purple with art work **In Memory of Douglas Gilvin**. They had a sun, pictures of Doug with angel wings in the back. All had a good time and it was a very successful relay. Hope our efforts help to beat cancer.

Doug's symbols are a policeman and a german shepherd.



Mary (7-11-77), daughter of Woody and Jenny Curtis, died from a heart attack, 6-21-93. Jenny laments about her family:

I've run myself to death with AshLee, but I'm not complaining as I once did. I've learned my lesson well. At one time it seemed all I ever got done was run to cheer leading practice, gymnastics, or ball games or something pertaining to the school, and I complained I didn't have any time to do things that really needed done; things just for me. I even told Wood, "I hope Mary doesn't make it for cheer leading this year so I can rest a little." But she made it with the highest scores on the team! So I told Wood, "Guess that's that, I won't get any rest now for the next two years. "

Because that tryout was for her junior and senior year. (Seniors don't have to try out if they have and make it for their junior year.)

Then all of a sudden Mary was gone, without warning. I was left without anywhere to go, nothing that mattered to do, no one to talk to, nothing. My whole world had suddenly crumbled. Nothing mattered anymore.

Then AshLee got worse and I realized she too could leave me. So I've been busy with her. She had open heart surgery October 15, 1996. She did well and got to go back to school November 6, 1996, but she was weak and tired most of the time. She then had to go back to the hospital in Cincinnati 3 times due to fluid building up around her heart.

Christmas came and went, we hardly noticed AshLee got chicken pox about that time and didn't go to school the last week before her Christmas break. School started back in January. She then had a bad bladder injection; got over it and got 2 kidney injections. When she started to get straightened out, Strep throat came to school. AshLee got it 3 times. Her antibiotics weren't strong enough. The last time she got it, she didn't say anything about her throat being sore so guess what, Scarlet fever! She missed almost 3 weeks of school then.

I don't know if her heart is any worse now or not. For the time being, she is well.

Michael just got over scarlet fever, he missed the last week of school. My newest granddaughter Lashay Deanne Curtis (my son, Timothy's little girl) also has the problem Mary and AshLee have. (AshLee will need more surgery when she gets older.)

I've got 5 grandkids, should have 6, But Michelle lost Jarette the day he was born. His heart just wasn't strong. Michelle is my #2 daughter. After Jarette died, she had a little girl, Larhan Ranai Moore who was 5, June 19. Larhan is fine, healthy as can be. Michelle, after Larchan was born, got a divorce from Donald, blaming him for Jarette's death, and then married a man named Steve. Steve has custody of his 2 children. And since I don't believe in

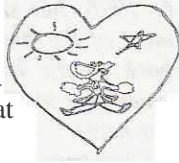
step children or step children (steps are to walk on and children aren't), I now have 3 grandchildren from Michelle.

Gayle, my #1 daughter, my first born, has a little girl, Bryonna. All of the grandchildren are healthy except for Timothy's little girl. She's the only one who inherited the heart defect, and Lashay is so special. I keep hoping the doctors are wrong and there's nothing wrong with her.

After quitting school, Timothy finally got his High School diploma. Mary would be so proud of him.

Somehow I know it's been a million years since Mary left. But it still seems like yesterday.

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



Robby (10-31-77), son of Robert and Sharon Reynolds, died by suicide, 1-27-97. Sharon sent what was said at Robby's funeral:

We are here to remember the life of Robert Karl Reynolds, Jr. It's a difficult time for all of you. It's certainly not something you ever wanted to be here doing, but we are and it's right that we come together for Robby. You know the truth. Many of you loved him and cared for him through the years. Now that love needs to be honored and acknowledged

It began when Sharon and Robert met and fell in love. Sharon's first husband had died, leaving her and Jerry and Jill alone. Now the four of them came together and became a family. Robert loved them all. A couple of years later, Robby was born. He was someone who belonged to all four of them. He was their child, their little brother. We never know what a child is going to be like when he or she is born. But there are always such hopes and dreams surrounding the birth of each baby. And each child is precious in his or her own way. It was no different for Robby.

From day one he was a child who needed little sleep, who had to be watched all the time. Robert worked second shift, so that made things difficult. As soon as he was able to walk,

Robby would try to get out of the house. Once out, he would go hide in the corn fields where the corn was taller than he was and he couldn't be found. He wouldn't answer when he was called. The solution was a poodle. The poodle would follow him. When Sharon would call, the poodle would come, giving away Robby's position. He was also an affectionate, loving child from day one. He never met a stranger. Didn't have a shy bone in his body. Along with this, he was a smart child. When Sharon went bowling, she would drop Robby off at his grandmother's home where she worked with Robby, teaching him so much. By two he knew his ABC's.

As Robby grew, he started wanting to follow the older children around. Wanted to be like them. Didn't understand he wasn't their age. He was going to do what they did. Nothing they did ever scared him. He was fearless. But he wasn't just fearless, he was impulsive too, doing whatever came to his mind without a thought about there being any consequences. It didn't occur to him that anything bad could happen or that he was doing bad. He just wanted to do it, and he did it.

When the school years arrived, he was primed and ready, but they weren't. He was a handful. At first they thought he was just full of mischief, just like all boys. He made a good friend Jeremy. Jeremy was settled, could calm Robby down, talk him out of doing some things. But it didn't work all the time. Over the years, it became clear that part of Robby's problem was that he was hyperactive, couldn't sit still, couldn't take the time to listen. That's why he always got into trouble. It made life tough for him and for everyone else. It effected how he thought about himself. Here he was, a child who could be so sweet, so affectionate and then suddenly get so mad. He was the most loving person, until those times. It was a pattern that persisted through his life.

In fifth grade he was put on Ritalin. That really helped at school. There were times when he would pour all of his energy into things. Like in sixth grade he found a passion for art. He won the **Artist of the Year Award** that year. But like with so many things, he tried doing and was good at, he tired of it. Never going back to it.

When he was in Junior high, he just refused to take Ritalin anymore. He didn't like the way it made him feel, he

felt like he was taking dope. He never came to terms with the chemical needs of his body. There was an imbalance. Like people with diabetes, or high blood pressure, he needed Ritalin. By rejecting this, he didn't realize he was really making things harder on himself.

But life wasn't always trouble. His mom taught him how to play baseball. Robert taught him how to shoot guns when younger, for target practice. Then rifles when he was thirteen so they could go hunting together. At thirteen he shot his first deer. He loved that and loved to go dove hunting, too. He always competed with his father in dove seasons, winning a couple of times. That must have felt great. He loved to dance, even in Junior high he would get out on the dance floor with the "girls" and they loved that.

Robby loved the outdoors. So there were go-carts, 3-wheelers, motorcycles and finally, cars. He had his own way of caring for things. Like cleaning the gas tank on his go-cart with water. He was too busy to listen to alternative ways of doing things. And he was too busy to check things out - like making sure there was gas in the gas tank, oil in the engine, water in the radiator of the Ranger. He just took off and went.

When he was fourteen, he did have time to stay overnight with Jill after her divorce because she didn't want to be alone. And he had time to ask his grandma, Louise, to dance with him at the wedding. Robby loved older people. He was good with them- like when he worked at the nursing home, he would take time with them all. And when he visited his great grandma, Zula, he always had a hug and a kiss for everyone when he left. Zula really loved him. And he always had time for Haylee - the one person with whom he was always able to manage his temper. He never got mad at her. He went to Restoration Christian School when he was a junior. There he had a good year at school. He never got into trouble about anything. He played on the basketball team, made friends. It was

a quiet, settled time in his life and in the life of his family.

After that year, though, he went back to Charlestown High School. Everything went back to the way it had been. He dropped out of school and got a job at Rhodes. Got his GED. Then out of the clear blue sky, he decided to go to graduation when he should have been at work. He had been a good worker, liked by everyone, cooperative, helpful, but it was the probation period. So, he lost his job. It happened that way with Robby.

The last few months had been difficult. He lost his job and took off for Florida. Lost his car because he couldn't make the payments. Cut himself off from his friends. Then he and Angela broke up--this was serious this time. And Robby withdrew into himself. Until it all became too much, and he killed himself.

We weren't meant to live life without other people. There are so many around who would have loved to help, given an ear, time. But we have to want to get well, to feel better. We have to be willing to reach out. He was always close to Jill. She would have been there. Jerry tried taking him to Florida and talking. He could have called Jeremy or Angela. Lots of people - lots of ways to get help. The bad feelings don't have to last. Even when it seems impossible, life can get better. Talk with anybody who has loved a few years. Life can get bad, real bad. But people who have been around a few years know that the bad doesn't last. It will get good again, and it will be possible to smile and laugh once more and feel good being alive. They can tell you that.

It's easy to let ourselves feel guilty. Why? Because it's hard to accept Robby as he was. As much as Robby was given, so many times as he was helped out, bailed out, spared the full force of the consequences of his actions- as much advice as he was given, directions that were offered - still it was Robby who decided to do what got him into trouble - quitting a job, going to Florida, burning up a motor, drag racing. So many of us wish they could have done something that day. But nothing anyone had done before had prevented those other things from happening. So, nothing that anybody knew to do could have prevented this.

That's hard to accept, but Robby made the decision.

This, now, is the time God gives to us to lay to rest all the memories of Robby that may be painful, may be sad. It's time to remember all that was good, warm, and loving in him. It's time to remember his smile, his laugh, his caring attitude. We can now trust Robby's life into God's hands.

Robby weighed 6 pounds, 11 ounces; 19 inches in length. A little red-headed boy! So loving, so sweet! Robby has an older brother, Jerry who is 26, and an older sister, Jill, who is married with a four-year-old daughter Haylee, and is expecting a little boy in July. Jill intends to name her son, "Tanner Robert" after her brother. She was really close to her brother even though the age difference. And yes, Robby loved Haylee, he was there for her birth and was a great uncle to her. She misses him so much. Robert Sr., and I have been married for 21 years. Robby was his only child though he has been a good father to Jill and Jerry.

For Robby's symbols, I have chosen an angel within a heart with a gold star and a yellow butterfly over top. The reason I have chosen an angel because I believe Robby is now with the angels and he is still enclosed by my love (the heart); the yellow butterfly represents my hope to be with him again (when I was at his grave site and was quite distraught, I prayed for a sign that Robby was all right and was with God and a yellow butterfly came and kept flying around his grave); the gold star (we were outside looking for the comet and all I was really looking at as the stars and wondering if Robby was there and could see us, and we saw a shooting star and I believe this was another sign that my Robby was with God and happy); also a small gold star came to be in my kitchen and in his girlfriend's house right after his death and no one knew where they came from.



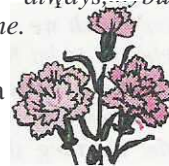
Curtis (7-27-90), son of Barbara DeLozier, died from an automobile accident, 5-26-75. Barbara wrote:

I hope that this letter finds you smiling. If not, perhaps the hug I've included from this fellow traveler will do it.

I'm taking a break from my grief to send loving thoughts and prayers your way, as I know that Young Jim's birthday is July 26 (the day before Curtis' birthday).

Please know that you and he are in my thoughts always... but especially at this time.

Curtis' symbol is a pink carnation.



John and Jan Greer's son, James (6-12-81), died from an accidental hanging trying to obtain the ultimate high, 2-13-96. Jan wrote the following:

James was our 14-year-old son. On the morning of February 13, 1996, I found James dead. I am a resident manager of an apartment complex and our apartment is adjacent to the maintenance shop. I always got up and walked into the shop to let my dog out the back door. As I turned around, I saw James hanging from a belt which was fastened to a ladder. Initially, I thought several thoughts all at once. First, I thought that this was some sort of a dumb joke James decided to play on mom. I realized very quickly, this was not the case. I then thought that this must be suicide. After we had some time to talk it over and look for a note, we (family and anyone who knew James) decided that this was not a "simple suicide" as a detective stated. We believe that James was experimenting with what I have heard referred to as "THE ULTIMATE HIGH," apparently there are different ways of obtaining this high. It is the feeling you get just prior to passing out. From what I have read and heard, most young people trying this do it in groups or pairs for security. In the event something goes wrong, someone is there to help you. In James' case, he was alone. We believe he passed out and was unable to save himself. There was no indication that he intended to take his life. The real tragedy is that even though I question every day what

*happened, it doesn't change the fact that James is no longer here. I (we) can no longer share the warmth of his hugs, the sparkle in his eyes, his wonderful love of life, his wonderful knack at knowing how to get a reaction, be it laughter, anger, complete frustration or simple joy. I do not believe James had any idea of the influence he had on so many people. We miss him as much today as we did the day he left us and I only wish we could have had one last chance to let him know just how much he meant to each of us.*

*It has been almost 16 months since the morning that changed all of our lives forever. We live on with James always nearby in our hearts, minds, and memories are each treasured*

*I continue to live and manage the same apartment complex. I live with my husband John, and Jason, our 17-year-old son. We were a family of four and now we are three. A poem that sums this up by Phyllis Davies--**Grief Climb Toward Understanding***

### **KICKED**

*Death kicked our family box.  
Four sides now three.  
A triangle is not a box.*

*On February 28, 1995, my family faced death very close to home when my oldest brother, Bob, passed away. Bob was 47 and died of AIDS One of the first realizations for me when James died was that, although I felt I understood what my parents were going through, I had no comprehension of the pain and emotions they were experiencing. The strength and courage that they used to survive each day was a wonderful example for me to follow. I only wish that none of us would have to experience such loss. However, we can not change what has happened, but only hope for some understanding and ability to live life one minute at a time and treasure each moment as if it may be the last.*

*James' symbols are an eagle in flight (one of James' favorite songs was On Eagle's Wings, also the name of our church youth choir) and a bear- very huggable and capable of a huge attitude!  
(Lovingly stated by older brother, Jason)*



*You never know when you will receive a blessing from someone who remembers your child years after their death. I wanted to share a treasured letter we received a few months ago:*

*My name is Tracy Miller and I live in London. You don't know me, but I am writing to you because I knew your son, Jim.*

*Almost one year ago, on January 21, 1996, I read the article about you in the Lexington Herald. I lost the article, and just now found it in a stack of old papers. Since I have your address from the article, I decided to write. Here is the story:*

*Sometime in August of 1990, I decided to buy a horse. Somehow, I found Wayne Perkins. In October, Wayne found a horse that was perfect for me, so I bought Babe and boarded her with Wayne for one month. Babe was my very first horse and I had no idea how to ride or care for her, so Wayne agreed to give me riding lessons. Six days a week, during the entire month of October, I was at Wayne's barn for about 5 hours a day. It was during this time that I met Jim.*

*Wayne introduced Jim to me as his cousin, if my memory serves me correctly, and said they were very close and liked to "rodeo" together. Jim was there a lot during my evening riding lessons; always smiling his sweet smile. He would often give me tips on riding, and horses in general. Sometimes he would saddle-up and ride with me to demonstrate something I was trying to learn. He would always pitch-in with Wayne and if we were cleaning up around the barn, the three of us were working and telling jokes and stories as we worked.*

*After the month was over, I brought Babe home to our farm in London and I never saw Jim again. I spoke to Wayne a few times since, but not for several years. My time with him and Jim at the barn were wonderful. It all ended too quickly.*

*The month after I brought Babe home, I became engaged. On February 16, 1991, I was married. Two weeks later, I was pregnant with my first son. Now I have 2 boys, ages 5 and 3. I am 32 years old.*

*I remember when I heard the news broadcast in May, 1991, when Jim's*

*death was reported. Ironically, I was at my barn. I couldn't believe my ears. Such a wonderful, talented, precious young boy, killed by such a strange, unpredictable event. I can still see his smiling face. He was not someone you could forget, even knowing him for the brief time that I did. He was very a special, wonderful person. He had a light that came from him that is hard to explain, and yet, I know you know what I mean.*

*Having two sons of my own now, I can't even bear to imagine the pain that you and your husband have suffered My sympathy goes out to you and my prayers are for your heart to know peace and joy again, some day.*

*Well, I will close now by saying you had a beautiful son that I was privileged to know, if only for a short while. You have my prayers that you and your husband will be happy and healthy in the years to come, until you can be a family with Jim again in heaven.*

*Grief is as individual as we are, but when we receive a hug from each other, or when I receive a letter from one of you, it is as if you are reaching out and touching me and telling me that you care. I continue to use Charlie Walton's analogy of our grief being a mountain, and each time we hug, or reach out to each other, we are saying that we are willing to take a shovel full of their grief away.*

*Those of you who were unable to attend J.I.M.'s picnic missed a true blessing. Charlie's words were so comforting. I am so sorry I did not think to record it... it would have meant so much to so many in the future. Charlie also gave us a sneak preview of his new book. Can't wait! I will never be able to thank him and Kay enough for sharing the weekend with us.*

**Chocolate HUGS to all!!**



