

# LAMENTATIONS

Issue 6

G.R.I.E.F

March 1993

## Happy St. Patrick's Day!!

March 17th is St. Patrick's Day and we are expected to wear the green; will we also be green with envy? Will we look at others and envy their loved ones and wonder why they are alive and ours are gone? Yes, we will-- maybe not on this particular day, but we have or we will. It is hard to accept- but accept it we must. We don't "earn" our loved ones, but we are blessed by having them, if only for a short time.

St. Patrick's Day is usually symbolized by the shamrock, which is a three-leaved plant, and it not only symbolizes this holiday, but could also symbolize our grief and recovery.



### Courage -

We need to have the courage to grieve and face our emotions and feelings whatever they may be. In the book *the Courage to Grieve*. Judy Tatelbaum states that having the courage to face

grief rather than avoiding it shortens the duration of the mourning period. We need the courage to go on with our lives and dismiss the words "If Only," "Why?" or "I should have." By burdening ourselves with these words we are saying that we are superhumans and could change things- we are not and can not. It takes courage, enormous courage to face the pain of our loved one's death. We need to confront these emotions as they occur rather than postponing the encounter.

Patience - Working through our grief takes time, energy, tears, and a great deal of patience with ourselves and with others. We will experience emotions that we have never experienced before. These emotions will be unfamiliar, intense, frightening, and overwhelming. It is important to realize that we all grieve differently and we must be patient with our family and friends when they don't seem to care or they don't appear to be as grieved as we. This may be their method of grieving.

We need patience with the people who seem to be ignoring us. It is usually because they do not know what to say, or they are afraid they will "remind" us of our loved one and we may cry. They do not understand that our loved one is always in our thoughts. I am quick to tell people it is okay if I cry, and that I love to talk about our son Jim. I have found that if I tell something funny that he said or did (and he did often), that "gives them permission" to talk about him and they will often share stories that I had not heard. We often have to make the first contact. I don't know how many times I have been told by the people in our town that I have helped them rather than they helping me. I really believe it is because I have shown them that Young Jim was a human being, not a saint. Please don't make the mistake of forgetting your loved one's faults. They did not become perfect because they died- at least our son didn't.

Perseverance - is having the stamina to stay with our grief and getting through it. Grief will hurt whether or not we face it. Robert Williams expressed in *Journey Through Grief*: "feelings are only healed by experiencing them and expressing them on a daily basis." Judy Tatelbaum reminds us that the only grief that does not end is

does not end is grief that has not been fully faced. Without Love there would be no grief. In *When Will I Stop Hurting! Dealing with a Recent Death*, June Kolf says to ask yourself these questions: *Would I be willing to exchange my disabling grief for never having known my deceased loved one? Were the love and the happy memories we shared worth my current pain? If I had known I would eventually suffer this loss, would I have turned away from the love to avoid the pain?* I can answer each of those questions with one short word - No!

We also need perseverance to accept our loss and to convince ourselves that our love for our loved one is not in any way related to the duration of our grief. Grief not only seems to "cling" to us, but we feel the need to "cling" to it. Once our grief dissipates, love can last in a more healthy and meaningful way. We can honor our dead more by the quality of our continued having than by our quantities of "Whys" and "If onlys," and a determination to "get stuck" in our grief. I read somewhere where grief is not for sissies Ain't it the truth!

Richard Gaylord Briley has written a book entitled: **Everything!! Needed to Know About Success. I Learned in the Bible (and so can you!)** Its subtitle is: **How to find the success in life that God really wants YOU to have!** My husband and I were humbled by his dedication:

Dedicated to Dr. Jim Taylor, President of Cumberland College, Williamsburg, Kentucky, and his wife Dinah.

The success they seek is success for others.

This book has been a revelation to me and my struggle with grief I now look at my "grief work" as a way of striving for success. Briley says that "success is not a ladder you climb to riches, rather it is a fire escape, a way out of a bad situation." The following three statements must have been written just for me:

- 1- Success is not the way UP, but the way OUT.
- 2- Success is an escape, the exit from hard times
- 3- Success is getting out from under  
NOT getting on top.

May we take each sheet of paper (burden) and deal with it, then throw it away, hopefully to never have to deal with it again. I challenge you- as I also accept the challenge—to imagine your grief to be this stack of papers. We have work to do and we should "get at it!"



Don't you like the word "success" better than "grief"? The next Lamentations will have the subtitle *S.U.C.C.E.S.S.* May we adopt this new word "success"- no, it should be a way of life, not just rhetoric. Here is another acronym:

**S - urviving**  
**U - under**  
**C - atastrophic**  
**C - ircumstances;**  
**E - volving**  
**S - systematically and**  
**S - uccessfully.**

Briley emphasizes that **success** is not necessarily the beginning of winning, but it is the end of losing. He continues by explaining that **success** is a word that we have to define for ourselves. If I may interject my own interpretation: I believe that **success** (grief work) is not the beginning of a wonderful life, but it is the end of our deep sorrow and mourning.

Briley stressed that **success**, in part, is only another name for escape from bad things that keep us in bondage, things that bind us to painful pasts, things that keep us from blossoming and doing our best.

Don't think for a minute that I am suggesting you forget your loved one -NEVER- I am hoping that we will be able to dismiss only those terrible memories (perhaps of the death itself) and can concentrate on the good memories. We must never permit anyone to forget our loved ones. Their lives were important, not only to us, but to many others, both now and in the future.

## Grief Grafts

In Memory of Shane  
-by Chris Navarre

Your sharing and your love have been so encouraging to me as I struggle with my own "success"- (see, I have accepted my own challenge!) Please continue to share. I don't know if you feel the "grafting," but I certainly do. I feel us joining and uniting against this tragedy we have all experienced. We will "graft" together and as a result, we will all become stronger - I promise.

Nancy Sprague who is a loving friend, sent me this poem that was written to a friend for a friend:

### **On the Violent Loss of a Child**

- for Barbara McNeish

*If I am not dead by morning  
I shall be famous as the woman  
Who wept a river of translucent tears.  
Tell me, what is the Nile, the Amazon  
Two minuscule streams of muddy water  
The Mississippi, a rivulet  
When measured by my drowning grief  
God, if it's true you hold the world  
In the palm of your mighty hand,  
Why did you let my dark-eyed son slip through?*  
Marilyn P. Donnelly

This is one of those questions to which we will never have an answer, but we have all asked it many times. I often feel that Young Jim's death may be easier to accept if I knew the answer to this and other questions.



Rowena Warner shared that her son Shelby was such a handsome young man that they put his picture on his grave stone. They also planted a pine tree near his grave and Shelby's friends brought ornaments to hang. His family members have written

poems about Shelby and I hope they will share them with us.

Jerry and Carol Mann's son Shane was killed in an automobile accident January 12, 1993. A wonderful friend of his wrote this poem:

*You brought us laughter and cheer  
with every growing year  
But now your time has come  
and you must leave us.  
You will be sadly missed  
Because your smile brought one to  
everyone's face around you,  
It's hard to accept you're gone  
but your mommy will live on.  
You left this earth so young,  
and your leaving left us with sadness.  
But every time we think of you, it brings  
a smile to our face.  
It was only yesterday you were talking in the hall,  
I remember seeing you standing against the wall.  
With every passing day, you will be remembered  
greatly  
and if we could see you, we know you'd be doing well.  
You're in the Lord's hand now, but your memory will  
dwell.*

Gary and Chris Barker burn a candle in their dining room window every evening and have done so since Christmas. They do this in memory of their son. Jason who died as a result of a bicycle accident on July 31, 1992. They are also working with their local high school on the *Jason Barker Spirit Award* and are in the process of establishing a *Jason Barker Scholarship*.



Judge Bert T. Combs died December 3, 1991. Sara, his wife, plans to dedicate a stained-glass window to the Baptist Church in Manchester in his memory. There are also scholarships honoring him both at Cumberland College and at the University of Kentucky. He meant so much to the people of Kentucky.

Mildred Godby shared the loss of her granddaughter Mary in May 1991, and her son Gerald in November 1992. She expressed how loving her daughter Nancy, Mary's mother, was in taking care of Gerald, who was Nancy's brother. This is truly a loving family that has experienced much grief.

Jan Oehring, gave her mother a bouquet of flowers for Valentine's Day 1991 with a card saying:

*I send a large bouquet your way  
For all the loving things you say.  
This one is roses,  
One for each thought of you . . .  
I lovingly return today.*

*Jan*

She also wrote this on Mother's Day soon after her Mother's death in May, 1991:

The End

*It is finished -  
it is over -*

*The End*

*A new start -  
A new beginning -  
Why did it end?*

I am enclosing a copy of an article written by Kathy Griffin. Haven't unusual situations happened to you in which you felt they were a sign from your loved one? It has happened to me and they have been so comforting. It is as if I am being told that Young Jim is all right and for me not to worry.



Rosemary Smith and I were talking as were Terasa Mason and I, about "how" people treat you after a death in the family, especially if it is a child. See if these sound familiar:

- They may see you in the grocery store and quickly turn down another aisle so they won't have to speak to you.

-If they do speak to you, they will talk about everything except what you want to talk about, namely the death of your loved one. They don't want to talk about the death because it makes them think that it could have happened to one of their loved ones (and I want to scream at them that it hasn't, so be more caring). Donna Herndon told me about a lady whose son had died two years previously. Someone asked her why she was still crying since her son had been dead for

two years, and she responded: "Because he is still dead!" **Good answer!**

-One of my favorite sayings, especially if I love what I am talking about, is "I thought I had died and gone to heaven." I have seen people actually gasp after I've said this.

-If you laugh or say something that is not "reverent" enough about your loved one, they look at you in a very strange way, thinking that you are not showing enough respect. If you had known our son, you could certainly appreciate any tale I could and will tell. Remember, their death does not change the fact that they were imperfect when they were alive.

-One thing that is irritating is to see someone look at me with that "pathetic look"- just give me a hug and tell me something that can perhaps brighten my day, or perhaps show that you care.

-When someone looks at me with that "look" and asks me how I am doing, I give them a cue as to whether this is the time to discuss "how" I really am. If I don't want to talk about "it," I quickly say "I'm doing just fine." If I do want to talk, I tell them exactly how I feel.

-When I want to talk about Young Jim and his life, I start out with a funny story so they are "given permission" to tell a story (and there are many) or share their feelings. I have found that this really works. When they see that I am in control and able to talk about Young Jim, they are usually quick to respond. It makes the situation less stressful for them and it adds a bright spot to my day.

Speaking of being STRESSED-  
That is DESSERTS spelled backwards.

