

# LAMENTATIONS

Issue 61

Middle

October, 1997

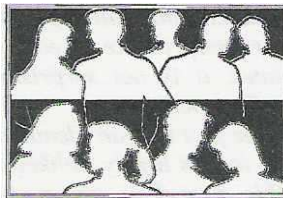
For the past 3 months I have been in the bed the majority of the time, unable to do much of anything but think. It has been a time of tears and enlightenment. There is nothing like a mandatory rest to clear the cobwebs from your brain. All of you have been in my thoughts and prayers as I lay thinking about the past as well as the future.

I have been diagnosed with degenerative disc disease in my neck and have been incapacitated... and, as usual, it reminded me of my grief and loss. Several of the cervical discs in my neck are in bad shape, and because I ignored the early signs of this disease, fooling myself into thinking that if I didn't think about these signs, they would surely go away. As usual, I was wrong. I am now paying the consequences.

Our grief is just like this. If we "choose" to ignore the grief that we have and the process we each need to go through to reach our own "middle," we will get worse. We may not see the signs now, but they will be there and will increase to the point that they will "expose" themselves in some manner. It may be through working too much, through excessive use and/or addiction of medication and alcohol, or destruction of family relationships and friendships. Pain cannot be ignored. It is a sign that there is something wrong and the pain we are suffering with the loss of our child(ren) is a sign that it must be dealt with... and, hopefully, in a nondestructive manner.

I can't tell you the outcome of either my physical problems or my grief, but I know that I am working at both of them each day.

As promised, this newsletter is dedicated to the extended family's grief.



Dr. Kathleen R. Gilbert, Ph.D. presented a paper at the 1994 Annual Meeting of the Association for Death Education and Counseling, held in Portland, Oregon, in April, 1994 entitled, "We've Had the Same Loss, Why Don't We Have the Same Grief? Family Meanings and Family Grief." Dr. Gilbert states:

*In order to truly understand the nature of grief in families, it is necessary to recognize that both individual and relational factors are operating and that these must be considered simultaneously. Grief within the family, then, consists of the interplay of individual family members grieving in the social and relational context of the family, with each family member affecting and being affected by the others.*

*Gilbert came to the following realization: Families do not grieve. Only individuals grieve and they do so in several contexts, one of which is the family. In the process of grieving in the family context, each family member makes certain assumptions about others in the family, one of which may be that because they have lost the same individual, their grief should be the same. Alternatively, some may also assume a shared view that their loss is more significant than that of others, that they*

*have suffered more because of the nature of the relationship they shared with the deceased. They may also believe that the loss was less significant for themselves and may be uncomfortable with the expectation that they should "put on a show of feelings" to accommodate other family members. Finally, due to their need to socially confirm the reality of the loss and its impact on their assumptive world, family members may attribute greater similarity in beliefs within the family than might actually exist.*

*Family members co-exist in an interactive system of confirmation and disconfirmation of beliefs expressed by each member. Families are made up of individuals who, because of their continuing relationship, attribute meaning to each other's behavior and will act "as if" quality to their observations and function as if they both agree (or agree to disagree) on the meaning of the loss. Behaviors are how their family relationships should progress. In fact, even though family members may not share a reality in the sense that their thoughts match, their need to believe that they hold a shared view appears to be strong. An example of this can be found in the tremendous difficulty parents have with accepting that their spouse is grieving in a way that is different from their own (Gilbert & Smart, 1992; Peppers & Knapp, 1980).*

*It is important to note that the family's involvement in construction of reality is not restricted to a loss situation; it is an ongoing process. In their daily interactions, family members may consider and validate each other's view of what has happened, is happening, and will happen (Reiss, 1981). As they encounter new information in their environment, they compare and attempt to confirm their beliefs, opinions, hunches, and other theories with each other. If family members see their*

subjective views confirmed by others in the family, these views are given objective reality, i.e., what they perceive comes to be seen as reality because significant others also see it that way (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Fowlkes, 1991; Patterson & Garwick, 1992); if not, they question their own or the other's perceptions and formation of an objective reality is made more difficult. It is this historical pattern of confirmation of reality in families that is brought to play at the time of loss.

Rosenblatt and his colleagues (Rosenblatt, Spontgen, Karis, Dahl, Kaeser & Elde, 1991) indicated that if two people experience a mutual loss, they are the least likely to be able to help each other. Rather than helping them to grieve together, the "baggage" of their relationship with each other and the deceased impedes common grief resolution.

Thus, within the family, the form of grief taken by each family member will have its own unique character. Many factors contribute to differences among family members: The definition of the severity of the loss may vary. Some family members may see the loss as devastating, others may see it as distressing and others may find it a relief. At different times, individual family members may see changes in their own interpretation of the loss. The meaning of the relationship that each family member had with the deceased will have been unique and it is this meaning that will need to be processed and worked through (Rando, 1984). The relationship grievers have with each other and any emotional legacies they share from the past may contribute to differences among family members (Bowen, 1991).

Such ambiguous losses often lead to disenfranchised grief (Doka, 1989) and may result in grieving individuals feeling stigmatized in their own family (Fowlkes, 1991). The gender, age and/or developmental stage of the grieving individuals will affect the ways in which they grieve. Because families are made up of males and females who cover a wide range of ages and developmental stages, these alone contribute to a great deal of strain. Behaviorally, they may differ, with different family members finding different coping styles

more helpful in resolving their grief. For couples, in particular, differences in cultural background will affect each partner's grief style.

A great deal is occurring simultaneously, as each family member attempts to come to grips with his/her loss. Intense emotions may be experienced as the reality of a future without the deceased is faced, accepted, and integrated into each family member's assumptive world. The interaction (if these differences and related conflicts may come together to place tremendous strain on the family (Miles, 1984). Given that family members have only each other's behavior and imperfectly communicated information on which to base their interpretation of each other's grief states, it is not surprising that such conflicts occur.

Given the fact that an identical experience of loss is highly unlikely if not impossible, how then can grief be resolved in a family context? How can families survive intact after a loss? Jordan (1990) has suggested that there are three essential tasks of grief resolution in families: There must be a recognition of the loss and acknowledgment of the grief felt by members. In order for families to continue to function, certain roles must be carried out by its members. Therefore, the family must be recognized after the loss. Finally, there must be a reinvestment of family members in this new family. In order to carry out these tasks, family members must work to understand what the family and its members need as they redefine what "family" means and how they will assess this new meaning.

The most essential element in grief resolution in a family is the ability to engage in open and honest communication (Gilbert & Smart, 1992; Figley, 1983; Raphael, 1983; Rwidlo, 1984; Silver & Wortman, 1980). If the loss is to be acknowledged as real and the grief made a collective experience, members must be able to communicate clearly with each other (Broderick, 1993; Jordan, 1990). Supportive communication facilitates discussion of thoughts and emotions and makes it easier for members to share their beliefs about the loss and its meanings for them. One important element of the

communication process and one that cannot be overlooked is that family members must engage in the simple but difficult act of listening to each other (Gilbert & Smart, 1992).

Paradoxically, differences among family members must also be allowed and accepted. Rather than striving for a single view of the loss, or promoting a single style of grieving, family members need to come to recognize the similarities in their grieving, but also to reframe the differences as strengths.

As stated before, sensitivity to the unique needs of each family member is important. It may be necessary for family members who have particularly troubling issues to work them out separately from other family members (e.g., a support group or individual therapy) (Gilbert & Smart, 1992).

The following list of symptoms of family grief is based on the available literature of families dealing with death. These symptoms include changes in communications patterns, changes in the structure of the family, and changes in extra familial relationships. Although these symptoms may seem to be diverse and random, several theorists have suggested that individuals and families progress through symptoms in stages, as "tasks" that must be undertaken and resolved.

### **SYMPTOMS OF FAMILY GRIEF**

#### Communication

- \* noticeable increase/decrease in communication
- \* noticeable increase/decrease in communication of a particular content area
- \* change in patterns of communication (i.e., who talks to whom)
- \* reconnection/cutoff of certain family members

#### Structural

- \* confusion in family hierarchy
- \* changes in number of dyads and triads
- \* role confusion
- \* acting out of members

#### Extra familial Relationships

- \* isolations
- \* withdrawal from friends/support network
- \* overprotection of members

## Grief Grafts



My nephew Lee's wife Regina wrote about her dream of Jim:

*I knew him by name and sight but, I really didn't know him. I had only two conversations with him. One, in April 1991, after he returned from his Senior Trip. What made us have a conversation about an intimate subject in his life? I still don't know. After that day we never crossed paths again until May 20, 1991.*

*I have very good friends whose family owns one of the local funeral homes, and they lived above it at that time. I spent most of my time there with them, day and night.*

*Late afternoon May 20, 1991, my friend called me only to bring very shocking news. News of someone I had only one encounter with, only a few weeks before, had been killed in a car wreck.*

*I was shocked and hurt, but I didn't know why; I didn't know him.*

*Later that evening we learned that Jim's family was going to honor his wishes and donate his organs. This meant that KODA (Kentucky Organ Donors Association) would be there soon. It was close to midnight when KODA arrived; they said that before leaving they would come up and let us know.*

*As usual, I slept in the living room on the couch, facing the sliding doors that opened to the steps from downstairs.*

*I had never had a problem with sleeping before while I was there, but that night I did. Finally, I did go to sleep and it was then that I had my second conversation with Jim.*

*I entered a dark room through the two large gates of Highland Park Cemetery and flipped the light switch on the left hand side. Everything was so bright and beautiful; the sky was, blue and there were flowers blooming.*

*I walked over to where Jim lay in his casket that was flush with the ground beside him and it was then that he said, "Lee (Jim's 1st cousin) loves you, and as long as you have this, you will have his heart." He put a piece of paper in my*

*hand and held it closed. Then I woke up to a knock on the door; the KODA team had come to let us know that they were leaving.*

*This was very strange for me, I didn't know Jim and I didn't know Lee, except by sight. Why would he tell me Lee loved me?*

*During the next few days I would pass the Taylor's home and my heart would ache and I felt a closeness to their family. I didn't go to the visitation or the funeral because I felt if I did that I was just jumping on the bandwagon.*

*I did grieve for him, but it was in a strange way, and I didn't know why. April 1993, I was formally introduced by a friend to Lee. He invited me to a party. On that day I signed a promise letter with a friend that said, "Lee will be the one I marry." She told me I was crazy. Almost six months later we were married at Jim's home. Jim was a very big part of Lee's life and when it came to our wedding day, he made no excuses that he still was. He wore Jim's belt buckle, I carried his Bible in my boot, and his boots were filled with flowers and placed on the bride and groom's table. Even at this point I hadn't told Lee about the dream I had the night Jim died. I knew that there would be a right time and right place.*

*One day in November I couldn't find Lee. He was at the graveyard. When he came home, I asked him what he was doing. He said, "I was talking to Jim." I knew that Jim was a touchy subject for him so I let it be. That night we were in the bed and I just couldn't let it go, the time was right.*

*I didn't know how to approach it so I just said, "let's talk about Jim." The look on his face was completely shock. He asked, "Why now?" I said, "This is the right time." I then began to tell him about this dream I had, and when I had it. After telling him the whole dream he looked at me with disbelief and said, "How did you know?" I was kind of confused until he said, no one knew what he had put into the casket with Jim. He then explained to me why Jim gave me the paper and told me what he did.*

*In the letter that Lee put in Jim's casket he wrote, "You are my life and I love you, I am giving you my heart to*

*take with you because I will never love anyone like I loved you again. I can't wait until I can be with you in heaven and I hope it will be soon."*

*He then looked at me and said, "He gave it to you, Jim gave you my heart. I gave it to him because I knew I could never love again and he gave it back to you!"*

*Today I am happy to say that I do feel closeness to Jim in a special way. I don't know why he did but, I am glad that he chose me.*

*Lee and I have been married four years October 16, 1997, and have been blessed with a daughter of our own,*

*Deavon.*

*Those two conversations seemed to have been the missing-links to my life.*

*Thanks JIM!*

*I wish I had known you. Regina Lynch*

My nephew Wayne shared the following:

*It's been said "even a blind hog will find an acorn every now and then." In the months since writing about the "middle," I not only found the acorn but my sight as well. I attempted to explain how somewhere between emotional extremes exists a comfort zone I call the middle, a place where we can lead functional lives. The real pretty spring day after the coldest winter day and before the hottest, most humid summer day. Before I wrote my thoughts down for Aunt Dinah's newsletter, I only went from the equator to the south pole with my heart and journeyed back to the temperate zones from passion exhaustion. Since writing everything down, talking more about Jim's death, seeing his legacy and hearing other family members' grief, I can explore the extremes with my brain tempering my heart. That is a whole new perspective and a much easier way to stay away from the "avoidance demons" when relating to others.*

*I worked a rodeo last night and I couldn't help thinking of the roller coaster that life is. I swelled with pride watching my son Cody, who is four, scrambling for treasures in the kids gold rush and shuddered with fear*

when a friend lay unconscious at my feet after a bull drilled his head. I can't forget these two events and maybe somehow that is what makes life teachings like the spring day, a place to catch our breath and brace for the next challenge.

In some strange way, writing down my thoughts on the impact Jim's death had on us all was my spring day. In that bit of rest and reflection I kept coming back to Aunt Dinah and Uncle Jim hearing things such as "our children aren't supposed to die before us." If we fall into a trap of supposed to, should have, could have, etc, we can't deal with the reality of our feelings. No loved one should die before we do! We are selfish; we love and enjoy the people we have built relationships with and we have strong emotions when they are ripped away from us against everyone's wishes. I can't imagine it being easier to lose a loved one just because of chronological circumstances.

Whether child, parent or friend, we as survivors have many things to deal with. For me the way to deal with it has been to explore the harshness of the extremes and find the comfort the middle will allow. Please at least try to organize your thoughts by some means and then have an open exchange with others. It could be the spring day which leads to mental wealth. I think my prescription for recovering the loss of Jim to my life has been:

1. Facing reality
2. Not staying in emotional extremes.
3. Support of family and friends.
4. Most important: Time, just hang on for the time needed

Written by:

Wayne Perkins, First Cousin

My brother, Bob who has been out of the country the majority of our married life wrote the following:

While schooling and working overseas for thirty years, my family increasingly formed the anchor around which my life swung. Although that separation robs you of the daily interactions and intimacies, it forces you to acutely recognize and appreciate the importance

of family life and of its strength and fragility.

My family and its members, therefore, did not evolve in my life, but rather made small "jumps" through letters, or long jumps during my every two or three year visits home.

Dinah was engaged and then married; was pregnant and then gave birth. I phoned her from Sydney, Australia a few hours after the birth of Jim II, and then followed his life as he became the nephew I would be proud to have called "son."

Jim II was a teenager when our son, Andrew, and then our daughter, Eloise, were born. From the first few years my wife, Ally, and I stressed the concept of family," and told stories of family members and occasions. By the time we visited home when Andrew was three, he really embraced the family, and in particular, Jim II who, gave him the time and understanding that Andrew needed Jim II showed Andrew what family means, brought Andrew into the family and became Andrew's family symbol. Andrew was fortunate.

Dinah's subsequent call telling me of Jim's death reordered my life and soul, my sensitivities and sensibilities. I could not tell Andrew of Jim's death for 3 months, but that was my need. I was then greatly concerned for Andrew's needs as he loved Jim so dearly, and since he had always had a preoccupation with "death." I told Andrew as the two of us walked along an isolated beach in Indonesia. He immediately looked up at me with understanding eyes and said, "I know." He then walked away for a few minutes, and on his return, showed no interest in talking further.

Since then, Andrew has lost his preoccupation with death and, instead, is comfortable with his belief in a "spiritual" world. And as we move from country to country, Andrew seems to be comfortably set up in his new room when his own photo of Jim is properly positioned

I am fortunate to see Young Jim every night when I put Andrew to bed.

In every road section that I design or build (Bob is a Civil Engineer), I think of Dinah and Jim and of Andrew and Eloise, and then I feel even closer to Jim II and the rest of our family.

My sister Elaine wrote the following:

Writing about Jim's death has helped me to understand more fully how devastating this event in our lives has been.

Reading other family members' memories and thoughts about Jim has made my personal grieving more bearable and much easier to talk about.

It has given all of us a great deal of insight into our own perception of death and ways of dealing with it more therapeutically. I was amazed as I read my son Wayne's tribute to Jim! I had not fully realized how much he loved and cared for him and how difficult a time this has been for him personally. I admire and am moved at his continuing quest for reaching the "middle" in his grief. The great love that he has for his son is endearing to me. Dinah has repeatedly thanked us for sharing our memories about Jim. She, too, now understands that we also are grieving - just differently. Sharing our feelings and thoughts is healthy and basic to good family relationships. I would encourage every member of a family that has lost a child to write their thoughts, feelings and memories down in black and white and present them as a tribute to our loved one.

Aunt Elaine

Frannie (7-6-76), the daughter of Frank and Sharon Smith, was killed in a skiing accident, 2-7-93. Frannie's aunt wrote the following poem:

A Remembrance of Frannie

At first, such a small flame,  
A tiny flickering flame, premature,  
yet, ready to face the world  
Small as that flame was it glowed,  
unwavering, tiny but strong.  
With each passing year it burned  
brighter, higher touching each and everyone  
with a radiant glow.  
It felt good to bask in that warmth  
for just a while.

Then, at its brightest, as fires must...  
it ebbed low, flickering.  
But, eternal flames do not die.

*Borne on the wind to another dimension.  
That flickering flame still burns,  
brighter, more radiant....  
never to ebb again.*

*The flame is Frannie, dearly loved  
by all who knew her.  
In our hearts her flame will ever burn  
bright.  
Eternal flames do not die.*

Aunt Bobbye  
Barbara Dunn Crume  
February 1993



Frannie's symbol is angels.

Robby (10-31-77), son of Robert and Sharon Reynolds, died by suicide, 1-27-97. Sharon's sister-in-law shared these memories with her:

*I am going to start my memories even before Robby was conceived. The year was 1976. Sharon and Robert were married the previous October and Sharon already had two beautiful young children. Robert was 29 years old and ready to be a father. However, getting pregnant this time wouldn't be as easy as it was with Sharon's other children, Jill and Jerry Dean. It took some surgery and time.*

*After a difficult pregnancy and some marital stress, Robert Karl Reynolds, Jr. arrived on October 31, 1977. Robert, who acts so cool and in control, arrived at Clark County Hospital before Sharon got there. When I think of Robby's birth on Halloween, Tom T. Hall's song, "Hello Country Bumpkin," comes to mind. I'm not sure why unless it's the verse, "fresh as the frost on the pumpkin", because of Robby's red hair and we associate pumpkins with Halloween.*

*It's a good thing Jill and Jerry Dean were in school, because taking care of Robby was a 24 hour job. And, if anyone told me that Robert would take to fatherhood like he did, I would have said they were crazy. Wouldn't you like to know what Robert talked to him*

*about all those nights when Sharon went to bed totally exhausted? He was a patient and kind father with a demanding little infant and toddler.*

*It's only human nature, but isn't it sad that we have so much patience with infants and toddlers and the older the child gets, the harder it is? Maybe it's because we're older and tired, but we all do it.*

*Robby was the smartest child I've ever known. A lot of children take their toys apart, but very few put them back together. Robby's brilliance and mechanical ability was apparent at two years of age.*

*I hate it when Robert answers the phone at your house. A pain goes through my heart, I don't have to guess who I'm talking to. They sounded exactly alike.*

*All the Roberts I know have a very warm and loving side to their complex personality. This was especially true with Robby. His patience, affection and kindness to older people will always be remembered. Also, he never acted too grown up to play with the younger kids always watching out for them.*

*I remember Robby's smile - so sweet and natural. His eyes crinkled when he smiled (like his Dad's). His hands they were too big for his body! Remember when he was tiny and he had these big fat fingers? I believe he would have done something with those hands, if he could have gotten his hands and mind in sync.*

*I do know that Robby is flying with the Angels now and isn't trying to conform to the rules in our world. Robby your leaving has left a space that can never be filled. You were unique, truly "one of a kind"*

Sharon's sister wrote this letter to Robby:

Robby,

*I have had a really hard time sitting down to write this to you, My problem is I don't know how to say what is in my heart. Hardly a day goes by that I don't think of you, wondering what you are thinking and what you are feeling. Can you see us? Do you miss us? Do you feel our pain?*

*It is sad to care about someone, to not say it in words, and then the chance is gone to say it face to face. I hope you hear my word, now.*

*Robby, I will never forget at Barbara Gail's wedding, you trying to get me to dance with you. I don't dance real good and I told you" I don't want to embarrass you." You told me, "Aunt Trish, I would never be embarrassed of you." This is something I will always remember. But Robby, that is what made you so special. The sweetness you showed me, the patience you showed little kids and the consideration you showed the elderly. This is the Robby I will always remember. These are the things I will treasure.*

*I know you have made new friends in Heaven, but one day, we will all have a reunion in the sky, and then we will be complete again. Until that time, I know you are in good hands. You are truly loved and missed*

I Love You,  
Aunt Trish

Robby's symbols are an angel holding a star inside a heart with a yellow butterfly above.



Arnold and Elaine White's daughter, Amy (8-10-74), was killed in an automobile accident 6-20-92.

REMEMBERING SOMEONE...

WHO WAS SO OUTGOING SHE USED A TRAFFIC JAM AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO MEET OTHERS.

WHO WAS SO EASY TO PLEASE THAT "HANGING OUT" IN BURGER KING'S PARKING LOT WITH FRIENDS WAS A REAL "NIGHT ON THE TOWN"

WHO STRETCHED EASTER INTO A MONTH-LONG CELEBRATION TO GIVE HER BABY SISTER HUNDREDS OF EGG HUNTS?

WHO WAS THE "DEAR ABBY" OF HER NEIGHBORHOOD OF FRIENDS: LISTENING FOR HOURS TO PROBLEMS OF OTHERS?

WHO WOULD ACT OUT "THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS" WITH SONG AND DANCE (HUMILIATION AND ALL) JUST TO ENTERTAIN A BUNCH OF OLD FOLKS SHE CALLED FAMILY?

WHO TOOK TIME OUT OF HER  
BUSY TEENAGE LIFE TO HANG OUT  
WITH HER YOUNGER COUSIN NEVER  
WORRYING IF THIS WAS THE "COOL"  
THING TO DO?

WHO WAS A SLEEK, 5'8", BROWN-  
EYED, BRUNETTE. CRAZY ABOUT MI-  
CHAEL JORDAN, MUSIC, AND  
DORITOS?

WHO HAS SPENT THE LAST FIVE  
YEARS IN HEAVEN ENTERTAINING  
THE ANGELS WITH HER WIT!

WHO WAS MORE THAN THIS  
TRIBUTE CAN REFLECT WITH JUST  
WORDS BUT THE WORDS OFFER A  
CHANCE TO REFLECT FOR THOSE  
WHO KNEW HER AND A CHANCE TO  
SHARE THOSE MEMORIES WITH  
THOSE WHO DID NOT!

WHO WILL ALWAYS BE OUR AMY  
DENISENORTH!

WRITTEN BY' BOBBIE WHITE HUFF  
(AMY'S AUNT)  
AUGUST 05,1997



Amy's symbol is a guardian angel.

Cecil and Jolene Hutchinson lost their only child, Anne Haake (10-10-67) and their grandson, Paxston (5 weeks old), in an automobile accident, 6-27-96. Anne's first cousin wrote about this Tragedy:

### TRAGEDY

*It seemed like an ordinary summer day when I got out of my bed that morning. I had no idea what the day was going to bring. I guess God knows best when He decided we should not see into the future for if we did, maybe some of us wouldn't want to live. The event of June 27, 1996, was tragic, one of the worst things that has ever happened in my family. Around 8:30 PM we heard the news. I was home with some of my friends and the phone rang. It was my mom's sister, Joe Ann. She said there had been an accident. The first thought that ran through my mind was that something had happened to one of my grandparents. All of my Mom's family lived about two hours away from us in Danville, Kentucky.*

*I can remember my mom saying, "No Joe Ann, no". She kept saying it over*

*and over as tears ran down her face. When she finally hang up the phone, she muttered the words, "Anne and Paxston are dead They were killed in a car wreck". An awful feeling overcame my body. I could say or do nothing. I couldn't even move. I did not understand why I was not crying. I felt bad, as if I was wrong for not breaking down into tears. I was in shock I could not believe what had happened It felt like a bad dream, a nightmare if you will.*

*Anne was my first cousin and Mom's older brother's only child. Paxston was Anne's five week old son. I never even had the chance to see him. Mom began explaining what happened on that horrible day. Anne had taken Paxston and her three year old son Parker on a shopping trip in Lexington, Kentucky, a forty-five minute drive from Danville. Anne did all the right things that day, both Parker and Paxston were strapped into their car seats and Anile was wearing her seatbelt. Anne had just crossed the County line from Garrard County into Boyle County, just ten minutes from home, when she apparently fell asleep and crossed the center line of the highway. An oncoming truck, pulling a wagon loaded with hay, couldn't get out of her way and it rolled over the top of Anne's car. Parker escaped with broken teeth and a burn on his forehead from the inflating airbags. Anne and Paxston were killed instantly. The three passengers in the truck were not wearing seatbelts, and one person received a broken arm, but the others were not hurt. That evening the television News station showed the accident but gave no names until "next of kin" had been notified. I had never thought about other accidents I had seen all television but after seeing what little was left of Anne's car. I felt sorry for other people who see accidents on television and know it's their family member. Television can be so callous! I still wonder how Parker got out alive!*

*Anne, apparently taking after our grandmother, was a vivacious four foot eleven and a one-half inch (she made sure everyone remembered that one - half inch) blue-eyed, redhead who was always smiling. I never saw Anne that she wasn't smiling or laughing over something. My mom told me that only*

*once does she remember Anne getting mad and that was because Mom wouldn't give her something she wanted, but she said Anne accepted a substitute and went on her way smiling. No matter what, Anne could find humor in anything.*

*The next day, my Mom and I went to my Aunt Jolene and Uncle Cecil's home. The house was crowded with their friends and family who were trying to help by running around cleaning the house and watering flowers. Food was everywhere, in the basement refrigerator, in the kitchen and outside all the patio, but no one wanted to eat. People were trying to get Parker to eat because he hadn't eaten since the day before, but he refused. My uncle was talking about some sports team with some other men while Aunt Jolene was inside reading the Bible and had Anne's old yearbook out telling stories of her high school years. The only thing she said about the accident was that from hearing about the car she knew that Parker had a guardian angel. Neither one of them really said anything about Anne's death. People were wanting to help and comfort Uncle Cecil and Aunt Jolene. I still had not cried*

*In Danville they do not have funerals on the week-end. Since Anne was killed on a Thursday evening, her funeral would not be until Monday, July 1, with visitation on Sunday, June 30, only. On Saturday, June 29, my mom and my cousin Heather, and I went to the funeral home so Heather could do Anne's nails. I knew that when I saw Anne the tears would come. I was wrong! Was there something wrong with me since I had not cried? Did I not have any feelings? As Heather began to file Anne's nails, I kept looking at Anne. Her hair was too curly -- not the way I was used to seeing her hair and the left side of her face appeared dark. I later learned that Anne's body had been severely traumatized from the hay wagon going overtop of her and it left black places on her face and hands. When Heather painted Anne's nails, I held one hand and fanned or blew on the nails to help the drying process. This is the only dead person I have ever touched, but I still hadn't cried I watched as the Undertaker had to cut Anne's clothes*

down the middle of the back because Anne was so swollen and this was the only way they could get her clothes on her. The undertaker said it wouldn't matter because no one would be able to tell, We stayed with Anne until they were ready to put her body in the casket, but we were asked to leave at that point, We asked to see Paxston, but there were problems and we wouldn't be able to see him until the viewing.

That afternoon my boyfriend Yancy and my brother David arrived in Danville. For some reason, Parker took a great liking to Yancy. Yancy played with Parker in the floor just like Parker wanted Since Parker hadn't eaten since Thursday, when he was in Lexington with his Mom, everyone was thrilled when Yancy was able to get Parker to eat a "Happy Meal."

Sunday, June 30, came all too soon. Parker insisted that Yancy ride in the car with him, Uncle Cecil and Aunt Jolene, which Yancy was more than willing to do. At the funeral home, Uncle Cecil and Aunt Jolene, along with Parker and his father, Jeff, got to see Anne first. Later the undertaker took the rest 'if the family in to see Anne. It was not until then, when I saw Anne with her baby lying in her arms that I began to cry. At that moment I knew the nightmare was a reality and that I would never again have the chance to see Anne, talk to her, or even hear her laugh. I also realized that I would never have the opportunity to know Paxston.

It has been ten months now and things are not much better for Uncle Cecil and Aunt Jolene. I wonder how they get through the day -- Parker no doubt. But every time we travel to Danville to visit the family, after we cross into Boyle County, we can still see where Anne was killed because the road is black from where the hay caught fire and burned This is another reminder for my Uncle Cecil and Aunt Jolene. Maybe someday the black will be gone from the road, but the black will never leave our hearts.

Written by:

Erica Prater, Anne's First Cousin

Jolene wanted to share this letter she had written to Anne:

From: MOM

Date: OCTOBER 10,1988

Subject: HAPPY 21ST BIRTHDAY  
TO MY DEAR SWEET DAUGHTER,

I JUST WANTED TO PUT SOME THINGS IN WRITING TO YOU SINCE THIS IS THE DAY THAT YOU HAVE BEEN AWAITING SO LONG...

AS I AM SURE YOU KNOW AND HAVE HEARD ME SAY MANY TIMES, YOU WERE BORN ON A TUESDAY. TUESDAY'S CHILD IS "FULL OF GRACE" THAT IS DEFINITELY YOU

THE NAME ANNE. "ANN - ANNE" (HEBREW, HANNAH, "GRACE")

FROM HANNAH THE BIBLICAL MOTHER OF SAMUEL/SAINT ANNA WAS THE MOTHER OF VIRGIN MARY

WHEN I WAS PREGNANT WITH YOU. I WANTED YOU TO HAVE A NICE NAME, NOTHING CUTESY - LIKE TAMMY OR MISSY I THOUGHT I WOULD LIKE FOR YOU TO BE NAMED FOR DAD. THAT'S THE REASON WE NAMED YOU ANNE CALVIN.

I FULLY EXPECTED TO HAVE A BOY BUT WAS SO THRILLED WHEN DR. HARDAWAY SAID, "YOU HAVE A BABY GIRL SHE'S PLUMP LIKE HER MOTHER." I REMEMBER SAYING, "I'M SO GLAD WE HAVE A GIRL."

YOU WERE A BEAUTIFUL BABY WITH A LITTLE ROUND FACE AND HEAD WITH NO UNRULY BABY HAIR. I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN PARTIAL, TO BALD HEADED BABIES. I WAS SO PROUD OF YOU THEN AND AM STILL PROUD OF YOU NOW

YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN DAD CARRYING YOU THE FIRST DAY WE WERE HOME. SINCE DAD WAS AFRAID THAT YOU WOULD BREAK, HE PUT YOU ON A PILLOW AND CARRIED YOU LIKE THAT FOR THE FIRST TWO OR THREE DAYS WE HAD YOU HOME

SINCE THOSE EARLY DAYS OF YOUR LIFE, YOU HAVE BEEN A JOY! YOU HAVE GROWN INTO A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN WHO IS A DEAR SWEET YOUNG LADY

THE EARLY DAYS OF YOUR YOUTH ARE BEHIND, AND YOU ARE NOW FACING ANOTHER EXCITING PART OF YOUR LIFE - WHERE YOU ARE PLANNING A CAREER, A WEDDING, AND WHAT I HOPE WILL BE A WONDERFULLY FULL AND EXCITING LIFE WITH JEFF AS YOU ARE ABOUT TO LEAVE

THE SECURE "NEST" OF HOME: MY PRAYER IS THAT YOU WILL ALWAYS MAKE CHRIST A PART OF YOUR HOME.

YOU ARE SPECIAL AND GROW MORE SPECIAL EACH DAY!  
MY LOVE.

MOM

Paxston's

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



Joanne (12-28-73), the daughter of Bob and Bonni Chapman, died in an automobile accident, 7-18-92.

"Joanne"

The last time I saw her was so long ago  
It's hard to believe how fast time will  
fly.

We grew up together, and I loved her  
so-but never got a chance to tell her  
good-bye.

In remembrance of nineteen -ninety one  
a year that brings sadness to my heart.  
I thought to myself, why has madness  
begun?

And why were we so far apart?

Your spirit lives on in our hearts  
every day  
as I hear that your goals had been  
set.

Your beauty was real and has not  
gone away  
even now, as I cannot forget.

You cannot be blamed for mistakes  
that have passed  
for surely, we've all had our share,  
And although your life in this world  
did not last

I still find that nothing is fair.

So hear, for my cousin, is a final  
farewell

as salute to a life free of fear.

I'll remember her always,  
as I live on in this  
hell-and right now, as I'm shedding  
a tear.

Jon Paul Landry Joanne  
Thompson's cousin  
TCF Orlando

*In Loving Memory  
Joanne Thompson  
December 28, 1973 - July 18, 1992*

*As time will come and go  
Sometimes like a distant wind  
My life sees many changes  
And I'm thankful for true friends*

*But as I long for wisdom  
And search for that distant light  
I think of yesterdays  
When I watched you sleep at night*

*And nothing that I touch  
in a sometimes lonely world  
Will ever mean so much  
As the love for my little girl.*

*Written By:  
Herman R. Fillinga*



*Joanne's symbol is a  
dancer with wings for arms.*

*Luke (9-18-78), son of Nim and  
Clara Patterson, died from an acci-  
dental gunshot, 9-12-94.*

*Class of 1997, Minus One  
In Honor of Luke Patterson  
(September 18, 1978 - September 12, 1994)*

### ***In Remembrance***

*You were so loving and caring,  
You were so understanding and  
sharing  
You could bring a smile to anyone's  
face.  
You liked to do things at your own  
pace.  
You loved basketball so great and so  
dear,  
Not being able to play was your great-  
est fear.  
Being the center of attention is what  
you craved,  
Loving every moment when people,  
about you would rave.  
You loved the girls each and every one,  
Always a big flirt, and never alone.  
You loved your times with the boys,  
Comparing notes on who had the better  
toys.  
Your family was a big part of your life,  
Who stood behind you whatever your  
strife,*

*I think your family, friends and co-  
players have a pretty good idea of  
where you are.  
You made a great impact and was one  
of the greatest friends, by far.  
Lucas Paul Patterson, you will never  
be forgotten -  
This you can be sure of.  
For within our hearts, your legacy will  
live on  
Forever in the hearts of those you love.*

*Written by: Agnes B. Brown  
September 14, 1994*

*A true Redhound Forever!  
Luke Patterson #00  
Sadly missed by all who love you!  
Our Son, brother friend and teammate!*

*Luke's symbol is a bas-  
ketball with wings and #00.*



*David and Judy Apple's son Brian  
(9-27-78), was killed on a motorcycle  
12-13-95.*

*The Senior Class of Jo  
Byrns High School The Class of  
1997*

*In Loving Memory of  
Brian Steven Apple  
Sept. 27, 1978-Dec. 13, 1995*

### ***EMPTY CHAIR***

*A chair in our class sits empty today,  
someone we love has gone away. He  
moved to a mansion up in the sky. The  
Lord's been building him One, you  
know. He said He would call when it  
was ready, and so on that Wednesday  
the angels came and quietly slipped in  
and called his name. Brian, come  
home, the Lord needs you today. The  
valley of death He'll carry you through.  
Don't be afraid, have no fear, the Sav-  
ior is waiting, so come my dear. He  
closed his eyes and slipped away. And  
just like Paul, we'll have to say he  
fought his fight, his course he run, he  
kept his faith, his work is done. But, we  
his friends must carry on. We'll miss  
his smile, his radiant glow, his friendli-  
ness, his warm hello. He touched our  
lives since first we met. And through  
the years we won't forget who gave him*

*faith, strength, and cheer, who took his  
doubt and fear. God was his comfort,  
friend and guide, He was the "Rock"  
where he could hide, Through valleys  
dim, over mountains steep, His hand in  
His, he could always keep. Now he is  
gone, Christ called him home and on  
this Earth no more he'll roam. And as  
he watches from up there he sees today  
the "EMPTY CHAIR." His words for us  
I'm sure would be "Don't leave it empty  
for long, you see, there's so much work  
that must be done. A mission to do 'til  
the battle's won. Each one of you must  
do your share and God will send  
someone to fill my chair." I know  
you're sad, I see your tears, but friends,  
it won't be many years 'til Christ will  
come and call each one. Your work,  
like mine, will then be done. The time is  
short, there is much to do, My precious  
Friends "it's up to you!"*

*Author Unknown*

*Judy shared this lamentation with us:*

### ***I'M STILL HERE***

*Swooping down from heaven when I  
am sad, putting happy thoughts and  
memories back in my head. Trying to  
replace the sadness with your warm  
smiling face. Memories of you linger as  
a glow comes across the whole place.  
Wings of spun sunlight and a halo of  
gold around your head. As you fly off  
laughing and, smiling I think of things  
you've said We hear the birds singing  
and you say I'm not really dead. I'm  
waiting for you in heaven like you've  
always heard said. Call me when you  
need me and I'll fly back in your head.*

*Judy Apple*

*"Make the Best of Life,"  
David, Judy, Jeremy & Ashley Apple*



*Brian's symbol is a pick-up truck.*

*Gary and Viola Correll's son, Mi-  
chael (8-18-79), was killed in an  
electrical shock-drowning 8-9-95. On  
Michael's birthday this year Viola  
received a card that she wanted to  
share:*

When somebody dies, a cloud turns into an angel and flies up to tell God to put another flower on a pillow.

A bird gives the message back to the world and sings a silent prayer that makes the rain cry....

People disappear, but they never really go away.

The spirits up there put the sun to bed, wake up the grass and spin the earth in dizzy circles.

Sometimes you can see them dancing in a cloud during the daytime when they're suppose to be sleeping.

They paint the rainbows and also the sunsets and make waves splash and tug the tide.

They toss shooting stars and listen to wishes.

And when they sing wind songs, they whisper to us,

"Don't miss me too much. The view is nice, and I'm doing just fine".

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



Stephanie (9-25-71), the daughter of Mary Kate Gach, was stalked and murdered 10-9-92.

This year my local Mensa group raised \$1200 from yard and book sales and a quilt raffle for the Stephanie Alexis Gach Memorial Scholarship, to be awarded to a student at the University of Montevallo where Stephanie attended during the last two years of her life. Last year following some national publicity about Stephanie's tragedy, Mensa Education and Research Foundation (MERF) received \$1000 in donations for a scholarship in my daughter's memory, which was awarded to an Oregon student.

In the planning stage is a high school memorial to be placed in front of the school on a grassy knoll, something along the lines of a tree-lined brick walk, but it could be something more elaborate depending on how successful an alumni drive or private contributions prove to be. With approval from the board of directors, I am full-speed ahead but very inexperienced at initiating or instigating projects, especially large ones, but I'm hopeful because I

have promises of support. No one else was doing anything about a memorial, and I have to honor and remember my child in order to keep going on.

I still intend to write a book about Stephanie's life but so far attempts at capturing her on paper have overwhelmed me. I have been told it may still be too soon. (four years)

I am awaiting notification of the next oral argument hearing date, probably in October, this one to be held before the Alabama Supreme Court Appeals Board This time is scarier for me because a state death penalty opposition group has entered the picture and will be arguing on behalf of the killer. This is routine procedure and yet the fear that something will go wrong is always present for me, even though we know this monster will never be released because of confessions and two separate convictions as a serial killer. Closure for me will not come before execution day, if at all.

This is a letter Mary Kate wrote to Stephanie 4 years later:

My dearest daughter - It is again early autumn. I am still here. I am tougher and stronger. Am I? My loss is more familiar to my life and soul. You left this world and my side. I can't make it be different. I can't change it. It happened. You will not return to me. I will never ever again see you on this earth or touch you or hear you. And that is more than my heart can bear. I sift through the sand, of each hour, trying to find you somewhere, somehow. I reach out my hand to touch your face and you aren't there. Where are you? My soul yearns to go where you are. Even as I am looking for you I know that you are at the very center of God's eye. On my lucky days I can feel the light from that center and I feel warmer.

It is one thousand plus five hundred dark lonely days since you left. I wonder how you would look today as you reach your 25th birthday. I recall your soulful newborn eyes as they struggled to focus on your mom's face, the feel of you thick brown hair, so long in both back and front that nurse reluctantly trimmed it and fashioned spicurls across your baby forehead -- that sweet

countenance fresh from heaven, "trailing clouds of glory." The jog keeps moving in, making memories less clear. Your face, you smile, your eyes, once as precious and familiar as anything I've ever known -- their light dims, glows, dims. I try to will my love to hold them fast.

I move on in time, farther away from the last moment I saw you. When you closed and locked the apartment door behind me that night, did you take one last glance- at your mom, only two hours before the monster was to squeeze your last life's breath out of you? Did you know? Could you possibly have had any premonition that you would never see me again? I had none. I should have. I should have. I have known no peace since that night. But I know that you have found peace and are now freed from anxiety and pain, and for this I am thankful. This knowledge helps me to breathe a little easier.

Steph, did you see the sunrise this morning or hear the cricket's song tonight? I have heard you, my darling, in the innermost regions of my soul, saying quietly to me, "Laugh, Mom!" I know it is you. I am grateful I can hear you and yes, I laugh and it is for you and because of you. Once upon a time, Paul McCartney's strong simple message was very meaningful for you, not so long ago when you were in high school. Remember when we listened together and exchanged knowing looks? Since your death the worse have taken on new meaning for me.

"There will be an answer. Let it be." I'll see you later, sweet Stephanie. Love. MOM



Stephanie's symbol is a brown rabbit.

Sharon Henry (12-4-66), died as a result of Hypertensive cardiovascular disease, 7-11-92.

In Memory of Sharon A. Henry  
by: Pattie Allison First Cousin

Sharon and I grew up together, being born only months apart. I stayed at their house all the time, it was my second home and Sharon was like a sister to me. I remember when they lived on

4th Street, Sharon, Sheila, and I would pretend like we were Charlie's Angels. We would go out and get in the van in the driveway and act like we were talking on the CB to Charley. Sharon would be Jill, Sheila would be Sabrina and I would be Kelly.

We always stayed the week-end together. We would go skating, to the Bowling Alley or just riding around with friends. We had fun anywhere we went, because Sharon was always in a good mood and enjoyed being with friends.

Sharon was going to teach me to drive her straight-shifted car. We took off on the straight stretch in McKinney, I couldn't keep from making the car die when I took-off. We laughed so hard that she had to get back in the drivers seat.

I had my 5 year class reunion to go to in 1989, I asked Sharon to fix my hair. I told her "don't make it stay up as far as yours does," needless to say when she got done, my hair was poofed-up like hers. I liked it after I seen it. She also gave in ear-rings, and shoes to match my outfit. Sharon always had her hair fixed to the tee. If she had something, clothes or anything else, and you wanted to borrow it, she would let you.

I'll never forget how Sharon was with Zachary and Angel. She was so proud of them. Always fixing them up so pretty. They had to be dressed perfect, just like their Aunt.

I have so many memories of Sharon; it's hard to put them into words. She knew how to enjoy life and wasn't afraid of trying new things. She loved her family so much. And her family loved her. Sharon might not be here on earth with us, but she is in our thoughts and our hearts. Often, we don't talk about her because we're afraid we'll hurt Jereline, but SHARON will never be forgotten or not missed I love her and miss her so much.

In Loving Memory of Sharon A.  
Henry By: Anita Aunt

There are so many things that I remember about my precious niece, Sharon, it is hard to pick just one.

One special thing is a poem she gave to me on my birthday. It tells how

much our lives had touched and how much we meant to each other. Sharon wasn't only my niece she was my best friend

We would go clogging or dancing or whatever, we always had a great time together. I miss the way she would get excited and clap her hands together and the love she had jar Hershey's kisses. Sharon was always so carefree and spirited

Sharon is missed very much by everyone. This is one thing we will never understand why God took our angel away, but I guess we are not supposed to.

Anita  
I Miss You & I Love You

In Loving Memory of Sharon A. Henry  
Love Mom

When Sharon started driving, every now and then she would want me to go riding around with her. The first time I remember her asking I said, "don't you think you would have more fun with friends than me," and she said, "all my friends think you are cool." So I would go and, of course, as soon as we got in the car the radio would go full blast. I am sure we went down Main street to the bowling alley a hundred times. Stopping along the way to talk to her friends now I am so glad I did that with her. When we would get home, she would ask if I had fun and I would say, "yes," even though I would have a headache from the loud music. I always felt good because she would want her mother to go riding with her. I thank God for all the things we shared

Loving Memories,  
Your Mother  
Jereline Bailey

Sharon and I had a lot of good times together and she touched my life in ways that no one else has, but the thing about Sharon that I will remember her most far is how she stood by me when no-one else would!

I was 18 years old, and I hadn't known Sharon for very long when my parents kicked me out of their home. I had an apartment and things were going really good until I lost my job. I had been almost a week with no food and the only thing I had to drink was

water, the rent was due and I was too stubborn to ask my parents for help. Well, Sharon came over to visit and she took one look at me and knew something was wrong. Well, I started telling her everything that was going on and she took me and bought me some groceries, things I needed like soap, shampoo, and she even paid my rent for me.

Sharon stayed with me for two days and helped me around the apartment because I was sick. Later on after Sharon left, I was put in the hospital for dehydration. I often wonder what would have happened to me if she hadn't come over that day. She did something for me that nobody else has ever done. Sharon had a way about her that nobody else had I've never met anyone like her and probably never will. I've always wondered why Sharon loved people so much and now that I think about, it the answers easy, it's not hard to love someone and accept and show people love when you love yourself Sharon had a lot of love and I will always love her for that!

Kristie Jarboe



Sharon's symbols are roses, cats and angels.

Don. V. (6-2- 77), the son of Don and Janie Drye, was killed in an automobile accident 7-27-93. His aunt shared these kind words:

Don V

The kindness you gave me in your warm and open way made you a very special nephew. Everlasting memories of you.

Love Forever  
May



Don's symbols are an airplane and an eagle.

Steve and Janice Tully's son, Todd (5-8-78) died in an automobile accident on October 12, 1996. Todd's sister Jennifer shared this lamentation and poem:

I woke this morning in tears after not much sleep. It has been eleven months since Todd's accident and, no matter

how much I try, I simply cannot ignore the twelfth of each month. I am sending you a poem I wrote about Todd. It hasn't felt like the right time, but I don't guess it ever will seem like the right time to share my thoughts about the death of my brother.

This month will be one year. How hard that seems to believe. I can close my eyes and see Todd walking down my sidewalk with that grin I miss so much like it was yesterday. The last time I saw Todd was the Sunday before his wreck; he had spent the night with me and was on his way to work that Sunday. He was so aggravated with me for waking him up. "Just 30 more minutes Jenn" he said. If I had known then what I know now I would have locked him in and never have let him leave. What ifs... I could drive myself crazy with them. I never thought I could miss someone so much and yet I do.

Anyway, I am sending the poem it took six months to write. I have thought many times about adding to it but I guess I could add to it the rest of my life so I have just let it be.

October 12, 1996

A knock on the door, a thump in the night  
I jump out of bed, blinded by light,  
"You have to come not, we really need to go"  
Please don't tell me I don't want to know.  
They say its your car, there was a fire,  
to leave my safe home I have no desire,  
my heart ripped out, I started to scream  
please wake me up from this horrible dream.  
I sat on the porch, I waited all night  
when you come home to say you're all right!  
Your eyes were so blue, your hands so strong,  
please tell me they're lying, tell me they're wrong.  
Two days go by we were all dressed in black,  
I begged and I pleaded but you wouldn't come back.  
Everyone kept saying I had to be strong,  
"your mom and dad need you, help them along."  
Three weeks go by, I finally go home.  
Am I ready to do this all on my own?  
Jerry had to work, he had no choice,

when I was alone, I heard your voice, I turned to find you, you weren't there, I sat there for hours in your favorite chair.

My friends cam by to see how I was, but they don't know, nobody does, how much I hurt and how much I miss one month before I gave you a kiss. Some said to forget it, life has to go on, others must have known of a special bond,

a brother, a sister, two life long friends, why did this happen, why did it end?

Six months have passed, could you give me a hand,

you don't have to pretend you really understand,

Don't shut me out, just let me talk, I'll tell you about Todd and his unique walk.

You don't have to be afraid that I will cry,

I have everyday since he has died. You didn't cause it, don't feel out of place, I trust you, I need you, you make me feel safe.

The brightest flame burns the quickest somebody said,

but my heart won't listen to what I know in my head,

I'll miss him always and I love him so, I don't know how to ever let go.

I'll always remember and I'll never forget,

The brother I love, my brother the Best!

I'll love you forever! Jenn

Todd's father wrote this lamentation:

I know Jennifer recently wrote, and I am so thankful she had someone she felt comfortable with to show her word,. Jenn is having a really terrible time. She is really mad at Todd for dying. Jennifer aches for all the things she won't experience because she doesn't have Todd. She will never be an aunt to Todd's children, she will never have Todd's wife as a sister-in-law, she can't attend his wedding or graduation from college, and when the time comes, she won't have Todd for support when she has to bury her parents.

Now! Losing Todd is quickly closing in on one year. it has been the longest and at the same time the shortest year

of our lives. For some reason, all our friends and acquaintances seem to think there is something "special" about a year. Three hundred sixty five days are not magical. These comments, though meant in sincere concern are, forgive the word, just "stupid!"

"Well, you've about made it a year so things are about back to normal." "The first year is to difficult, but once you've made it through that, you'll be OK." On and on with comments about that "magical" year. BULL' And double BULL' One year, two years, 5 years, no matter the number, things will never be the same or never will they approach "normal."

I always knew that I would write these feelings at the end of the first year, and you know what? They are not a bit different than those of the first month. Not the first couple of weeks, because shock controlled those first couple of weeks. We go on because we have to, but it is difficult at best. I have a ritual every night. Every night I go to bed with the last words on my lips being "I love you Todd, "every morning I wake up with the same words. "I love you Todd. "

I wander outside at night and look to the heavens and talk to my son. I look at his parking spot in front of the house and don't see his car. I looked at full moon tonight and it was so beautiful, I wondered out loud what my son would have been doing tonight at college. I think, I know I hope, I know. I miss my son so much it hurts. Janice and Jennifer know and try to go out of their way not to upset me because it takes very little to make me "cry" over Todd. There are things I wanted to say and never did. We all know that feeling. There are things I wanted to say and never had said. He understood. I look at all his photographs and see the wonderful young man I had, and hurt because I don't have him anymore.

I keep saying, "I," but this has affected Janice and Jennifer the same way. It is just easier to put it into "my" feelings, because it hurts so much to ask theirs. I know theirs.

I know all the things I thing my son wanted, the things he loved, the things he did, the people who meant the most to him, and the love he had for his mother, and sister.

The computer I write this on is his. I can't make myself remove anything on it, and probably never will. I want things the way they were those 365 days ago. They aren't magical days, and I can't have them back.

I've tried to describe these feelings so many times, it becomes difficult to even think them. But the one word I keep coming back to is "lonely." I'm so lonely for my son I ache. Janice and I attended the races at Bristol twice this summer and each of those weekends, even with 130,000 people crowded around, several times I felt completely and totally "lonely." Everywhere I go, something reminds me of Todd, and I'm lonely all over again. How can you be alone with all of these people around? The loss of a child does that to you. How can you simply start to cry because something "hits" you the wrong way? The loss of a child does that to you. How can you not care if others see your true feelings? The loss of a child does that to you. How can you keep the faith there is life after death? **THE LOSS OF A CHILD DOES THAT TO YOU!**

We lost Todd, and everyone that sees this has lost a child also. Your feelings are your own, and nothing anyone says will change them. The loss of your child did that to you. Don't feel badly, don't be ashamed, and above all maintain that feeling. It is just one thing you have left of your child My loneliness won't go away, and I'm not sure I want it to. It is just another reminder of my dear, dear son Todd. Thank You.

Thanks for the forum. Steve Tully

Todd's symbols are Yin-Yang symbol, a computer, a crescent moon.



Wayne and Jayne Newton's son, Chad (5-21-72), died from heart failure 9-3-96. His mother shares this lamentation:

I love your newsletter. It helps me very much. Sometimes I can only read a small portion at a time because of the overwhelming sadness - but I do believe it is part of the healing process.

You asked me to write you about my loss-My son Chad died Sept. 3, 1996 he was 24 years old Actually, I think he and young Jim were born the same year - 1972. Chad's birthday was 5-21-72. I had Chad a few years longer. He graduated June 1995 from Auburn University in Chemical Engineering - was married to a beautiful girl named Mandy on April 24, 1996 and they were in the process of getting a job to move to Pensacola, Florida where they hoped to start a family. Unfortunately, that was not meant to be. Chad had a genetic disorder we were all unaware of For some reason his body was unable to process and rid of cholesterol. He had severe blockages in several main arteries, which he did not realize. He was very active played baseball - loved to fish and golf and was in very good physical condition - so when he became violently ill Sept. 2, 1996, and was vomiting and having a terrible headache - everyone thought it was a 24-hour virus or food poisoning. His wife took him to the emergency room in Scotsboro, Alabama, where they lived - and even though his blood pressure was 177/99 the doctors just gave him a shot for pain and sent him home. The shot did help relieve the pain, but it also helped slow his system down and, eventually, his heart could not pump enough blood and oxygen and when he laid down early that morning - his system just shut down and he left us.

I believe in my heart he never suspected anything was going to happen and that he would die - he just thought he had a bad virus and he would weather the storm. Mandy stayed home from work that day to be with him. Chad went to bed at 7:00 a.m. in the morning and Mandy thought all he needed was to rest. She said she heard him snoring for a while then it seemed to stop. About 10:00 a.m. she went to check on him and he felt cold She went to cover his feet and then the realization hit her that something was terribly wrong. She became hysterical and called 911. They instructed her on how to perform CPR- and she tried her best to do that until the ambulance arrived Chad was already gone. Even though this was a disease - he should have known he had a health problem

our doctors should have known. Why did God not give us at least one chance to fix it? I felt so cheated for myself and my son and my daughter-in-law and my daughter. I felt isolated I felt that this only happened to me and my son - and that is why your newsletter helps me so much. It helps me realize that tragedy is all around us and we have to bond together to help each other. I miss my son so much. My heart aches all the time. I know you understand that hurt. I, too, want to reach out to others and help. Thank you so much for the time you spend preparing the newsletter for reaching out to others.

Charlie Walton is a friend of mine. He does script writing for a company I work for in Atlanta. He came and talked with me several months after Chad had died and gave me a copy of his book "When There Are No Words." He introduced me to Compassionate Friends. My daughter and I attend the support meetings. My husband, Wayne, Chad's stepfather, has been involved in designing and maintaining the Internet web page "Atlanta Chapter of Compassionate Friends."

Chad's symbol is a golden lab.



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

In Memory of Robby White  
To Friend, and Family

We would like to thank everyone for your thoughts and prayers in the loss of our son. We will never forget the gifts of love and understanding at a time when it was deeply appreciated We will hold onto our faith that God will get us through this. God could not have blessed us with a more loving and caring son. He was the best son parents could ever wish for. We did wish and pray for him for the first ten years of our marriage. God answered our prayers and sent us Robby. We don't understand why God only let us keep him for fourteen years. We can only believe God needed our Angel to come back home now. We just wanted to let

*you know your acts of kindness made a great difference.*

*Holding onto our faith,  
Robby White's Family*

Robby's symbols are a pizza and a small child walking away in the sunset.



Billy (6-23-81), the only child of Bill and Teal Snapp, died from accidental carbon monoxide poisoning, 2-25-96.

*In January of 1996, my husband and I lost our only child, Billy. He died accidentally of carbon monoxide poisoning in our garage at the age of 14.*

*We are having a difficult time, working through the pain of losing our only child. Billy was the center of our universe; he was our present, and our future. The three of us were very close and Bill and I are at a loss as to how to proceed with our lives.*

*We attend two Parent Support Groups a month. The Atlanta Compassionate Friends is a good but large group; and locally here in Conyers, several bereaved parents have begun to meet more informally and intimately.*

*As you know well, one's support systems begins to fade away very quickly. For us, that is more true since we only recently moved from Illinois and haven't been in Georgia long enough to have "life-long friends" as we did in Illinois. There are a few people I correspond with, and that gives me as much 'release' as anything outside the support groups. I have always been a great letter-writer, and I am very much appreciative of the friends who are able to read my letters and reply to them with love and compassion. One of my friends from high school (32 years ago) also lost her only child and our two boys are buried near one another in Illinois; corresponding with her has been a comfort to me. Finally, we both have also read everything we get our hands on. Your newsletter is **great**.*

Teal also sent the following letter in reference to some of her friends:

*I am referring on behalf of Alan & Pam Nolan Their daughter died in January of 1997 after watching an MTV program about "how to get high through partial asphyxiation" It occurred to me that, since you hear from so many bereaved parents, you might have heard of other children who have died in a similar circumstance.*

*Alan and Pam know of a couple more children who died after watching the MTV program, but would like to know of more. They are contemplating trying to force changes in MTV programming.*

*If you know of other children, could you contact Alan and Pam?*

*Alan & Pam Nolan  
4971 Lake Forest Drive  
Conyers, GA 30013  
770-929-3426  
E-Mail: [arnolan@aol.com](mailto:arnolan@aol.com)*

*You can also contact Teal Snapp:  
E-Mail: [thesnapps@msn.com](mailto:thesnapps@msn.com)*

Billy's symbol is a bowling pin.

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

*Sometimes it is hard to ground myself and put both feet into this reality in order to be more functional on a day-today basis. I suppose mending painful fences has shown me the meaning of the experience in the release of pain and hurt that is replaced by a light. I am learning that there are constant reminders of heaven all around us. All of this has been a hard lesson for me and my family, but we have become stronger people and a very close family, which I felt we were always a close family.*

*We all miss our Michael very, very much and some days it is super hard to cope with the fact that he is not coming back. Every night, I take my dog outside to potty, as Michael helped to pick her out, and we visit with Michael as he is the brightest star in the sky. We know he is smiling down on us and taking care of us whenever he can from up in heaven and we are so happy to know we do have our own special guardian angel up above.*

*Michael seems to answer a lot of our prayers, God willing, and for this we are thankful.*

*Soon we will be into October. This is so hard to believe, but time waits for no one. I hate seeing the time go by so fast, but with time comes the healing, so I suppose this is the good thing about time passing so swiftly.*

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



Claudine Nickens' son, David Whitley (2-26-70), was shot and killed 1-17-95.

*Just writing people takes its emotional toll but the feeling of comfort when I get a letter from someone is worth all the trouble.*

*I can't contribute to your newsletter with comments from extended family. My family hides their head, in the sand but I will send you something for your next one.*

*Isn't it remarkable what we uncover about our own emotions while producing the newsletter. As we work on the articles, we process and reprocess our own feelings. This has helped me to keep on dealing with David's death and to start remembering his life and the good memories.*

Claudine also shared an article that was written about a victim/witness program in which she participates:

### **System Works For Victims**

*Claudine Nickens had planned to be remarried in January 1995, but postponed the wedding when her 24 -year old son, David Whitley, was slain in DeKalb County during a drug deal gone awry.*

*Like many other grieving mothers, Nickens plied detectives and the medical examiner with questions. Did he die instantly? How much pain did he suffer? "For a week, all I thought of was how that bullet felt going into his heart," Nickens said.*

When the case entered the criminal justice system, Nickens turned to the DeKalb District Attorney's Victim/Witness Program for help and finally began to get some answers to what she would always find unbelievable: Her son was robbed and killed while selling an acquaintance about 4 ounces of marijuana.

The district attorney's office assigned her an advocate who kept the family abreast of court proceedings and procedures, answered their questions, lent them moral support and accompanied Nickens to hearings. She said they treated her as an individual, not a number.

The killer, Jose Wright, 20, confessed, pleaded guilty and is serving a life sentence. For that, Nickens was thankful. "In so many cases, it doesn't end up with someone serving time," she said.

The Victim/Witness Assistance Program could help a lot more people who find themselves in painful circumstances, such as Nickens, if the county could just find the space.

"We have federal money to provide services, but no place to put the personnel," said District Attorney J. Tom Morgan. "We have to wait until the [courthouse] renovation starts, unless the county can find temporary space for us somewhere."

The district attorney's offices cover the seventh floor and part of the eighth of the courthouse, and, because of the lack of room, the child support staff is renting a suite at the Wachovia Bank building down the street.

"We can't use any grant money to rent space so we're kind of stuck," said victim/witness program coordinator Roslynn Harris, whose office barely has enough room for a visitor's chair. "We don't know what we are going to do."

The program assists victims and witnesses of serious crimes.

Some are in shock, like Nickens, while others are angry, as her daughter Terri, now 17, was when David died. Some need professional counseling before they can adjust.

The staff and volunteers sometimes refer them to other agencies for assistance or help them apply for Crime Victims' Compensation. "The

information is there if families will avail themselves of it," Nickens said. "So many people are so angry with the legal system, to be honest I think they miss the help they need. Roz helped me tremendously."

Each year, the number of people in need of the program increases as the county becomes more urban, said Susan Cobleigh, district attorney office administrator and spokeswoman.

That is why administrators like Harris have learned to apply for grants to ease the growth pains. Last year, DeKalb County received \$41,700 from a Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) block grant from the federal government to provide direct services to the victims of violent crimes.

On Oct. 1, that amount will jump to \$297,644 over a two-year period. "We are currently in the application process," Harris said.

The funds don't come from taxpayers, but from criminals paying federal fines, she said.

In the last 2 1/2 years, Nickens has found solace in her faith and her husband, Mike Owens, whom she married the September after David's death. She also started an outreach ministry for other grief-stricken families by publishing "Alive Again," a quarterly bereavement resource guide and newsletter.

But her ordeal is not over. "The next stage for our family is, we have to be in touch with the pardon and parole board to try to block any early release of [Wright's] parole," she said.

For a free copy of "Alive Again" write to:

**Claudine Nickens  
410 Wynbrook Drive  
Auburn, GA 30011**

Written by:  
Celia Sibley, staff writer  
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Johnathan Stone (10-15-79), the son of Rick and Claire Brown, was accidentally shot 12-16-95.

I received my Lamentations today, and was thrilled and relieved! Rosemary, what a wonderful friend you are,

not only to Dinah, but to all of us! Thank you.

Our family is fast approaching Johnathan's 18th birthday. What a wonderful celebration we would have had. We did for Rocky (our oldest son) on his 18th birthday. He turned 18 six months before Johnathan was killed. We had a huge bar-b-que with a blinking sign in the front yard, and even a "belly-dancer!" I'm so glad we got it all on video, and with several shots of Johnathan!

Matthew, (our youngest son) is following in Johnathan's footsteps and playing competitive soccer. He loves it, and has Johnathan's #25.

Rick, my husband doesn't travel like he used to. This past spring and summer he got a lot of yard work done. He planted tons of flowers, so I'm able to keep fresh flowers on Johnathan's grave all the time.

Johnathan still has several visitors at his grave. His friends are still visiting real frequently.

I'm trying to come up with something special for us to do on October 15th. I'm sure we'll all go to dinner at "Out-back Steak House." That's where we all went for his 16th birthday, his last! I want so much to come up with something that will help ease the pain for all of us.

Happy 18th Birthday Johnathan!  
My blue-eyed, red-haired, freckled  
faced angel!

I Love You and Miss You Always,  
Mom

Johnathan's symbol is a soccer ball and teddy bear



Sue Wilson's daughter, Taiann (11-3-79), was murdered with her boyfriend, Matt Coomer (8-17-78), 8-31-95. Several members of her family wrote the following impact statements:

Her 19 year-old brother wrote the following:

Taiann Nicole Wilson, the perfect friend and little sister. Taiann did not deserve to die and especially the way that she did. I loved my sister dearly

*and I have done everything in my power to do the correct things since she has been gone. I stood beside her casket for eight hours and thanked every person that came to pay their last respects to a fifteen year-old, that was so perfect that she should have been an angel instead of having to live a short life here on this corrupt planet that cannot even give her the right justice after she was killed the way that she was. Nothing with a heartbeat should have had to die like this.*

*Your brother,  
Stephen Wilson  
8-26-97*

This letter to Taiann was written by her sister:

*The hurt and sadness in my heart of hearts is unexplainable to you my friend.*

*I pray that noone I know ever experiences such a tragedy.*

*The way I miss my little Tai Tai would not ever be explained -God forbid the blood to drop on your step as it has mine.*

*All of the pain and sorrow and what I thought agony to be was nothing compared to what my baby girl must have seen her last few minutes in this cruel world.*

*Tai... sissy is so sorry for your pain! Oh God, what I would take for you if only I could. I know Sis you're happier than you've ever been, it's just that I miss you so! To give you a butterfly kiss once more, to fix your hair, to hear you tell me I had too much mascara on or a new way to fix my hair, the right shoes to wear, to plan the trip to Kings Island. I so wished I had made the time to take you and your friends. Our little trips to Wal-Mart when I spent money on nothing on IBC Root beer, how my stomach wrenches for you. I know you and Matt spent all of your time together, but I still miss you Tai, I won't ever stop!*

*Tonya S. Baumgardner*

Taiann's grandparents shared some of their thoughts:

*We lost our Taiann 2 years ago on August 31, 1995 when Jeff Coffey*

*murdered she and Matt at House Fork Creek. As I sat there in the London Court room for eight days of torture listening to how my sweet Taiann was killed by this man that I had to sit and look at everyday of the trial. As he sat there with a smirky grin on his face as he talked to his lawyers with no remorse of what he had done to our lives. He admitted to doing it in court without showing any emotion. The murder scene pictures and coroner pictures of Taiann's little body that was shown to the jury we thought should have been enough.*

*We as a family could not say anything and had to restrain our emotions, it seemed that we had to cater to him and his family. It is not fair that the criminal has more rights than the victims. It was so very unfair that we had to sit and listen to his family members on the witness stand play the sympathy role to the jury. It was very unfair that the jury could not hear what we had to say about Taiann and Matt.*

*It's as a close family have lost Taiann forever, while his family can see him, visit, and touch him. With us, all we have are sweet memories and her grave to visit with flowers and tears. I always petted her with her favorite food that she liked. I remember the last breakfast I made for her, I asked her "how do you want your eggs," she said, "well I like scrambled and over medium, "so I fixed her one egg of each. Also I fixed her bacon to go with her eggs; she smiled with love and told me "you are the best grandma." Taiann would always come to see us and she would eat a peppermint candy cane, which she loved so much. Taiann would tell us that you are the best grandparents in the world. She will always be our "Precious Angel", for which I will always have a peppermint candy cane waiting for her.*

*"My Precious Angel, With All Our Love"*

*With All Our Love, Grandma and Grandpa  
Arthur Wilson and Wanda Wilson*

The following lamentation was written by Taiann's aunt:

*I set down to write this letter to you tonight for Taiann, my niece, in hopes*

*that you can understand how great her death has affected my family and I.*

*The last picture I have of Taiann is of her feeding my little girl, Jessie. Every night when we say our prayers, Jessie tells Taiann she loves her and misses her and she asks Jesus to take good care of her in Heaven. I know Jessie doesn't understand death, but she knows that Taiann has gone to a safe place.*

*Taiann had written Matt a letter, which I have a copy of, telling him that she hoped they could come to Lexington to visit Jessie and her Aunt Bobbie & Uncle Walley. But Matt took her to a place that was special to him. A place that held a lot of his childhood memories. I have wished a 1,000 times that they had been able to come to Lexington.*

*At the time of Taiann's death, I had just found out that I was pregnant with our son, Dalton. He will never know what a sweet, kind and gentle person his cousin was. I tell him about her beautiful, warm smile. How she was always happy and loved to give Jessie hugs. Though I still see her sweet smile in my memory, I desperately miss hugging her and talking to her. I wish I could have told her goodbye.*

*I grew up on a farm in Lincoln County and one of my chores was to go to the back of our farm and bring home the cows milk. I was never afraid to do this myself, but now there's very few places in which I feel safe.*

*I was brought up in a Christian home and was taught that we should love everyone. It's very hard for me to conceive that someone could do such a horrible thing to Taiann & Matt for no reason. If he were wounded Taiann would have tried to help him. That's the kind of person she was. I try so hard to get past the suffering and pain Taiann had to go through the last few minutes of her life, but going through the trial has intensified my feelings of loss and grief for her.*

*As a nurse, I've always made it a priority to keep my patients comfortable and as free of pain as possible. I wish I could have been there for Taiann to protect her.*

*We miss Taiann daily, but mostly I've missed her at night when I'm awakened by a dream of her and can't go back to sleep. I will always miss her sweet, gentle and loving nature. I loved those qualities about her, because they made her so easy to love.*

*Sincerely,  
Taiann's Aunt Bobbie*

This poem was written for Tai and shared with us by her cousin:

TAI

*There is a beautiful girl  
for whom I know.  
Always made me smile  
how I loved her so.*

*Shared many experiences with  
her in the beginning of my life  
never knew such a small thing  
could take her away such as a knife.*

*The anger I felt the  
pain I went through  
how I wished more than  
anything that this wasn't true.*

*There are still times I  
wonder how I should feel  
it was such a shock to me  
it still doesn't seem real.*

*In my prayers at night I tell her  
that I can't wait to see her again  
because I ask God to speak  
to her before I say amen.*

*What happened to her  
was such a terrible sin  
but she knows as well as I that  
we will see each other again.*

By: Aaron Pennington  
Cousin of Taiann Wilson

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



Shelby (2-13-74), the son of Jaybo and Rowena Warner, died due to complications from Hodgkin's Disease, 10-28-92. Last year his sister Teresa sent this letter:

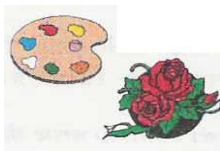
*I've been working really hard the  
past couple of week, trying to stay busy.  
I've spent the past couple of Sundays at  
the cemetery cleaning Shelby's lot,  
painting the rose trellis,*

*planting mums, and I put up some Halloween decorations. Shelby really enjoyed Halloween as well as other holidays. Shelby will be dead 4 years on October 28th. We buried him on Halloween. This was so strange, I used to tell Shelby about some friends that I had in high school who lived on a big farm. On this big hill on the farm there was a Indian Cemetery. We walked there every Halloween after we were past the age limit (not too old, but past the age limit! ha ha) to Trick or Treat. Shelby always wanted to go there. I promised him that if he got well enough that I would take him to that cemetery on Halloween. I just find it so strange that I did take him to the cemetery on Oct. 31st, it just wasn't the Indian cemetery, it was our family cemetery.*

*Please say a special prayer for me the next few weeks as the Anniversary of Shelby's death draws near. I seem to spend a lot of time at the cemetery trying to keep things clean and straightened That's what he would want. Everything just so-so. He was very particular with everything. So I try to keep things the way he would want them. Perfect but still funny and humorous, that is why I always do ghosts, pumpkins, scarecrows etc. on Halloween, Santa's on Christmas, Bunnies on Easter, Red roses and balloons and chocolate on Valentine's Day, etc. I try to do the same things that I did for him before he died These were things he enjoyed. He loved "trick or treaters." He would dress up in a costume, sit outside and hand out goodies. All the neighborhood kids would really enjoy it. He would buy things for 2 or 3 weeks to make his goody bags. We still do the same at Mom's on Halloween. My dad usually dresses up or wears a mask. The kids love it and "so does Shelby," I know he's always there!*

*Love ya,  
Teresa*

Shelby's symbols are an artist's palette and red roses.



The following poem was read by Lady Sarah McCorquodale at the Funeral Service for Princess Diana at London's Westminster Abbey:

*If I should die and leave you here  
awhile,  
Be not like others, sore undone, who  
keep  
Long vigils by the silent dust, and  
weep  
For my sake - turn again to life and  
smile,  
Nerving thy heart and trembling  
hand to do  
Something to comfort other hearts  
than thine.*

*Complete those dear unfinished  
tasks of mine*

*And I, perchance, may therein com-  
fort you.*

Lady Jane Fellowes also read. The following was the reading she shared:

*Time is too slow for those who wait,  
Too swift for those who fear,  
Too long for those who grieve,  
But for those who love, time is  
eternity.*

I am finally on E-Mail, if you would like to contact me, send poems, etc. as you have in the past, you may reach me at

**dinah@cc.cumber.edu**

But since I am still unable to write or type, please don't expect an answer soon. Being incapacitated in this manner has been an extremely challenging as well as humbling experience. When you are surfing the web, be sure to check out the Cumberland College webpage:

**www.cumber.edu**

Hope to see you in cyberspace.

Since I'll be 51 this month, and my whole body is certainly falling apart, I have decided to, "take life one piece of chocolate at a time."

