



LAMENTATIONS



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"Smile on a Stick"

The following article was written by Darcie Sims.

It's fall again, and the leaves are beginning to change. I wonder how they know when to turn, and what color? Do they know what color they are going to become? Do they get to pick their colors? Do leaves know they are destined to grow, turn, and fall? Do they know they will become a source of great joy to children who will jump into huge piles of them, or of great fatigue to those adults who have to rake them back up again? Do leaves care? Does anyone ever stop and ask the leaves what they are feeling or how they are doing?

Of course not. Yet, WE are asked everyday how we are doing. I sometimes feel like I should be the weatherman (weatherPERSON, excuse me) and post weather warnings: "whether" you should talk to me today or not.

Everyone wants to know how I am doing. Not WHAT I am doing, but HOW I am doing? Every place I go, there are kindly faces asking me, "How are you doing today?" Did they ever ask me BEFORE?

Well, actually, yes. Traditionally, everyone ask "How are you doing?" We greet each other with "Hi" or "Hello," and then we follow immediately with a "How are you doing?" statement, delivered at lightning speed, matched only by the pace of our exiting feet! We don't expect an answer to our question, so we don't wait for any kind of response. The actual greeting consists of "Hi-howyadoin?"; no one really wants to know.

Do we ask dogs how they are doing? Do we stop and query the yard (mine would simply gasp jar water)? Do we question the leaves as they turn, or engage in conversation with the wind and the moon? All these things change too, but WE are the only ones whose daily transformation into something different is monitored and recorded by the grim nods of understanding heads.

Fall is a time of change for all of us. Half the world begins its journey into winter's sleep, while the other half stretches awake into spring. Do we ever ask the world how it's doing?

I think the reason no one wants to know is that we are all afraid that you might not be doing very well; and then what are we to do or say or think or feel? Gads!

In order to combat the "hi-howyadoin?" syndrome, I have developed an answer that can be delivered faster than the fleetest foot.

I believe everyone who has ever been born, bereaved, grieved, patted on the back, suffered acne, or lost his most important possession (a No.2 lead pencil at the A.C.T. test site) will find this helpful.

I have developed a "Smile-On-A-Stick" It can be carried at all times and used whenever that dread "Hi-howyadoin?" question arrives. We can whisk it out, display it across our face and mutter "Fine, thanks," in any tone of voice that suits our current mood.

I have discovered that "Smile-On-A-Stick" satisfies the curiosity of even the most dedicated "Hihowayadoin?" mutterer, and we can both go about our day feeling responsible, compassionate and sensitive. It's cheap to make and costs far less than psychotherapy (which I often recommend for the .friends of the bereaved). It won't fix the leaky faucet or cure a broken heart, but "Smile-On-A-Stick" can speak a

thousand words for those who walk slowly enough to hear the answer, and it becomes the mask for those who need to have us wear one.

"Hihowayadoin?"

"I'm fine, thanks. And I have been ever since I made my own 'Smile-On-A-Stick'" It's my sense of perspective, my sense of humor, my attempt at turning the falling leaves into a playful pile in which to jump instead of a chore now done alone...

Don't ever be without one. Pass them around at your next office meeting. You don't have to be bereaved to need one. The "Hihowayadoin?" can strike anywhere, and now we have the answer everyone has been waiting for. The readymade smile that says to those who only see and listen it says, "I'm struggling, hurt, angry, tired, lonely, confused, but not dead! I think I'll make it, thanks."

Do leaves worry about what others think when they cascade into piles on the lawn? Probably not, but If you see a tiny smile-on-a-stick in that pile of leaves.. maybe we're not the only ones who need a listening heart!

*Since January is such a dreary month, I am declaring the first week as **National Smile Week**. Use this sucker as a smile. As you lick it on the blank side, the smile will face those who ask, "Hi-howyadoin?" Little do they know that you are sticking your tongue at them.*



Grief Grafts

John and Lynn Clarke's daughter, Linnie (8-9-52), died from acute leukemia, 6-9-97. The Clarke's write about, A Long Year - 1997:

It has truly been an up and down year; but the Christ, whose faith we celebrate, continues to give us strength.

February: With lots of snow around our mountain home, Lynn opted to have a total knee replacement - as she recouped - John skied almost daily even swap.

March: Bob, while on Phoenix business joined us for a few days and with his dad tried the slopes!'

April: John's 50th Pi Kappa Alpha reunion took place without us as we spent the two days in Colorado Springs in the worst snow storm in history. The plane had to make an intermediate stop - oh well!!

May: This was truly our high and low. Linnie suddenly became ill - transferred to Vanderbilt ICU on the ventilator with acute leukemia. Christine #2 graduated from high school the next week and played her flute duet beautifully.

June: After 3 weeks at Vanderbilt Linnie left us to become God's beautiful angel on June 9 - 2 months before her 45th birthday. She left an incredible legacy in Murray and a void in her family which no one can imagine. Thank God for our strong faith.

July: Deb and family spent the week of the 4th. Jesse, 15 1/2 and Stevie, 14 pushed grandpa's best on the golf course. Steven recently honored as J C. Penney's National Employee of the Year!! As Deb finished #20 with Delta.

August: Bill and the girls helped us celebrate Christine's 18th birthday. Carrie, 19 1/2, and Courtney, 16, are doing well. Wow 2 in college now. Courtney head football trainer and honor student still at home. Bob, Joanne, Ashley, 12, and Nicholas, 8,

joined us to have a beautiful few days together. Great relief among laughter and tears. All are fine. Bob's company continues to grow.

September: Revealed the incredibly beautiful North rim of the Grand Canyon, all of Southern Utah, Telluride and Durango-Silverton railroad to help Lynn and John celebrate #48.

October: Lynn felt she should end our first year in our new home as she began it. So new foot reconstructive surgery, doing quite well. Hopefully cast off early December. Enough's enough!!!

November: Our first snow fall, then none. Beautiful weather. Thanksgiving with Lynn's cousins in Mesa - Great!

December: Not yet here as we write, but hopefully we'll spend the Christmas season seeing all of our family.

May God continue his blessings on each of you and may all of us know that His faith will give us hope, love and peace for a new year to come.



Linnie's symbol is a rainbow.

Gary and Angie Cunningham's son Ernie (12-12-73), was killed in an automobile accident, 11-10-95.

Today is the second anniversary of missing Ernie with every heartbeat. But still we go on, don't we?

I had a dream about Ernie not too long ago. I wasn't desperate in this dream, only content to sit and look at my son. After a short while he looked over at me and he said, "you know I can't stay, Mom." I wish I could see my son every night, it seemed so real, and I felt so good the next day.



Ernie's symbol is an apple.

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

November was kind of a turning point from fall to winter. I do like fall and all of its beautiful colors, but I

sure do hate winter. It always seems like the beginning of the end "Time goes by so swiftly." There seems to be no MIDDLE. The fall colors are so beautiful, but the beauty is so short lived and everything dries up and withers away to nothing so fast. This, to me, is very depressing and leaves me with such an empty feeling. I suppose it is good to have the hustle and bustle of Thanksgiving and Christmas, as it sort of takes my mind off of the empty feeling and gets me motivated to move on to December.

January, however, is a cold and lonely month for our family, as our Michael was born in January and he brought such light into our lives and brightened up a very dull month for all of us, and of course, every month thereafter. He gave us so much to live for. He always had a twinkle in his eyes and a smile on his face. I look at his pictures now, and I feel his eyes moving with mine and his lips smiling at me. Sometime, I felt like he illuminated the whole room and everyone in the room. Now I go outside and look into the sky, and I see an ominous red glow that lights up the sky. I do believe that it is my precious Michael and he is letting us know that he is just fine.

What would we do without our families? It is hard sometimes, to go forward because of our loss, but keeping their memory alive is a full time job, because so many people think our loss is over and done with, so they never talk about our Michael. I suppose they just do not understand, and unless you go through the loss, you do not understand. I hope they never have to find out how it really is. LAMENTATIONS have been so good for me. Such support, I just can't thank you enough. What a wonderful thing you are doing. Young Jim, I am sure, is very proud of you.

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



Eddie (10-21-66), only child of Becky Kirkwood, was killed in an automobile accident 11-8-96.

Every day is a special day to remember Eddie. His birthday will always be special to me.

His symbols are his family and his computer.



Elaine Stillwell's two children, Denis (2-4-65), and Peggy O'Connor (2-23-66), died from an automobile accident 8-2-86 (Peggy), and 8-6-86 (Denis). The following article was written August 21, 1997, and published in the Rockville Centre Herald:

A week before the 11th anniversary of her children's deaths, Elaine Stillwell, founder of the local chapter of The Compassionate Friends of Rockville Centre, attended the 20th Annual Conference of The Compassionate Friends (TCF), in Philadelphia, July 24-27. The Compassionate Friend, a national self-help organization, offers friendship and understanding to bereaved parents and siblings. There is no religious affiliation and there are no dues.

Forty members of Rockville Centre Chapter were among the 1,600 bereaved parents and siblings present from the United States and world-wide. The Rockville Centre banner was proudly displayed.

At the conference, Ms. Stillwell presented two workshops. The first one, "Helping your Heart Through Grief," was delivered to standing room only. In fact, more than 300 bereaved parents crowded the room, filling all chairs, the aisles, and flowing out into the hall.

All the stipends from her writing and speaking engagements go directly to her children's scholarship, the Peggy and Denis O'Connor Scholarship, established at the University of Dayton.

The second workshop, "How to Build a Strong Chapter," reflected her six years of chapter leadership, where she and her husband, Joe, welcomed over 800 bereaved families, at their monthly meetings at Molloy College. The Stillwells went on to become New York State Regional Coordinators, hosting four annual training conferences in Rockville Centre.

The Chapter will celebrate its 10th birthday in October. It still meets every second Friday of the month at 8 pm in the Multipurpose Room on the

second floor of the Wilbur Arts Building at Molloy College. Discussions on aspects of grief and coping and surviving are part of the meetings and there is a Lending Library offering a wide range of grief support books and tapes.

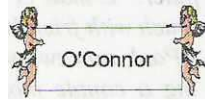
A year after the Stillwells' children, 19-year-old Peggy and 21-year-old Denis O'Connor, were killed in a freak auto accident on the Loop Parkway near Jones Beach, Elaine and Joe Stillwell founded the Rockville Centre Chapter,

Many other support groups have sprung from this Chapter,

As one bereaved parent recently wrote to the Stillwells, "Isn't it wonder/ill that 11 years later Peggy and Denis still make a difference in the world!"

"That thought helps my heart a lot," said Elaine Stillwell, as she marked Peggy's and Denis' 11th anniversaries on August 2 and 6,

Denis' and Peggy's symbol is an angel.



Judy Byer's 17-year-old son, Jamon, was killed in an automobile accident, 10-8-93,

I have been looking back through my cards and letters, They have meant so much to me,

I have been keeping myself so busy that I hardly know if I'm coming or going, This is good for me, I am WI extremely restless person I know why the Lord gave me so many talents, I get bored with one thing for a short period. I love to sing, draw and paint, design clothing and sew, The list goes on and all. I am in church three times a week At my church, First Baptist of Albany, Sunday morning and night, and Wednesday nights, After that my doctor Carol Peddine and I sing for other churches, singings, and Revivals,

The pain and heartache of missing Jamon is the same, I have learned to act better with it.

The holidays are approaching us and it is going to be hard once again.

I have written a letter to Rosemary Smith and Donna J Carr, We all share something in common.



Jamon's symbols are a deer and roses,

Roxanna Aldridge (12-7-74), twin daughter of Katie Cornish, died from a Bilateral Pulmonary Emboli, 11-23-94,

We had a very nice Family Thanksgiving. It was good to feel alive again Things are looking up, I still have "those" days,



Roxanna's symbol is a deer.

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

As you might expect, Billy's death and related baggage has dominated our lives throughout 1996-97. We attend two parent support groups a month; The Compassionate Friends in Atlanta and another, smaller and more close knit group here in Conyers, Meeting with other bereaved parents has provided direction and focus, Most importantly, we've found comfort and healing in the generous, attentive support that our friends and family have extended throughout these two years; we wouldn't have made it this far without their unconditional and powerful love, We have a way yet to go, but we seem to be progressing.

In addition to trying to accept our loss, part of our effort to work through our grief has been to embrace new and old activities in our lives. We have actively searched for place to spend our energy, our time and our love. Last year, I accepted a position on the Parent-Teacher Association Board of Billy's school and over the summer, I participated in a Youth/Adult bowling center where a Sportsmanship Award for teen bowlers was established in Billy's name, A big thrill, for me, was to watch one of my youth partners roll a 300 game.

Billy teamed up with one of Billy's former coaches to coach a park district basketball team, and they won the regular-season championship in the 13-15 year-old division. Both of us joined the Mentor Program at Memorial Middle School and spent some quality time with two boys, Eder from

Mexico and Denis from Bosnia. We have joined the program this year and now Bill is mentoring Denis' younger brother Arnel, and I have a young man whose main problem is extreme poverty and, probably, neglect. Both Bill and I are now bowling with the kids in the Youth/Adult League; Bill is again coaching basketball, this time with 16-18 year olds; and I am increasing my involvement here in the Brentwood subdivision. I'll continue editing the neighborhood newsletter and will be secretary for our new Board of Directors.

Bill's work continues to be demanding. In addition to managing the EEOC's legal unit in Atlanta, he developed and directed the EEOC's National Trial Skills Training Program in Washington.

We spent Thanksgiving at home with our friend Larry from Maples, and with Kerry and Ronna (who did most of the cooking.) Since then, we've worked on our jet-lag and now are fast approaching the dreaded holidays and anniversary of Billy's death. Before we know it, more months will have passed and we'll find ourselves embracing life, no matter how difficult that it may be.

Billy's symbol is a bowling pin.



Psamantha (8-10.82), the adopted daughter of Gary and Diann Foster, died from an asthma attack, 3-17-91.

Where has this year gone? 1998 will be here in just a few days & it seems that 1997 just began. I know many do not like yearly letters, however, I hope this will be interesting enough for all our friends to at least glance over. Our family brings greetings & blessings to all of you. God has been good to everyone, even during the difficult times; He is with us carrying us through. The popular poem "Footsteps" says it best: When times were too hard for you to walk, I carried you.

Our family has shrunk quite a bit since June so there are just 10 of us now. First Tracey, Philip's girlfriend, who had been living with us & attending Campbellsville University was accepted into a Radiology program in Orlando, Florida.

In August Patricia & David moved to Lebanon Junction, KY. They share a home with Patrick, who continues to work for Senator McConnell. Patricia is

studying for her Master's at the Kent School of Social Work. David attends a preschool.

Our foster children number just three; Jessica, 8; Brittany Ann, 6, & Melinda, 16. Jeff 'moved to Texas; Barry now lives in New Jersey with his birth father; & Brittany Nicole returned to her birth parents in October. We pray they are all doing well and are safe and happy.

Most of us traveled this year. August found us on a plane to Los Angeles where we had a Marriage Seminar. We met many new friends and Gary renewed some old acquaintances.

Most of this year has been spent learning various functions of our computer. E-mail is a neat way to keep in touch with friends.

Paul, now two years old, began walking a couple months ago. He enjoys playing ball. His favorite activity is finding something to get into. On his last cardiology, visit we were told he will need surgery in the spring to close "a hole." We continue to pray this hole will close on its own, all the other holes have.

Peter John spent two weeks at the KY School for the Blind in July attending the Visually Impaired Preschool Camp. Our apartment at the school was very nice, and the floors were very clean when we left thank., to Peter John's carpet cleaning. His favorite activity continues to be asking about everyone's vacuum, how it works, what color is it, how many brushes etc. He is attending Kindergarten now and learning to write and read Braille at home. In November Peter John had surgery to create a soft palate in his mouth. He's now standing beside me singing Christmas Carols, his favorite music.

Philip, who has chosen a Business Major, is a Sophomore at Campbellsville University.

Sandy continues to be home schooled and is working hard on resolving many issues of her past.

Penni, now 16, is a new driver and still willing to go out anytime on an errand. She's a Junior at Taylor County High as well as taking some College level classes at Lindsey Wilson.



Psamantha's symbol is a butterfly.

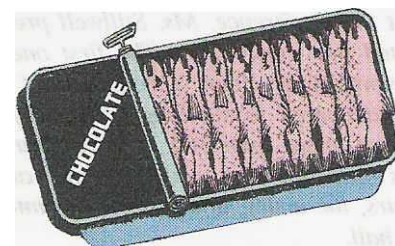
Paula Hardin's son, Jeremy (3-24-75), died 9-5-94, as the result of injuries he sustained from falling from a bridge.

My creative juices haven't really been turning out great ideas for some time now but I thought the chocolate sardines somehow seemed right. A sardine is kinda put in a situation from which there is no escape, so it lays back and accepts the very very close companionship of others sharing the same

fate. It's like all the travelers in our journey together. And the chocolate part - well, do we really need an explanation? Didn't think so.

Carrie is a freshman and 15 now. She is great company. She is involved in all the activities that Jeremy was in. She also loves wearing her brother's school jacket with his name emblazoned across it. It really isn't morbid - she's just carrying a bit of Jeremy around with her all the time.

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



Memory Quilts will make a quilt from your child's clothing. Cost: approx, \$250 A wall hanging can be made for less and with less clothing. Memory Quilts 1-800-528-1530

TX - Technology has produced some software that reproduces and stores photos. Photo CD's are available. 35mm negatives (color or B/W) or color slides are scanned and converted in/a digital images, then reproduced on a compact disc which can be viewed on your T. V or computer monitor. Contact Photo CD's at Kodak Corp. 1-800-235-6325

New "Echo" software (for Macs and Windows PC's) offers computer users the ability to create digital "multimedia albums" for individual family members, Contact Delrina Sales Dept.: 1-800-268-6082