

# LAMENTATIONS



Issue 66

Middle

March, 1998



March is such a diverse month. We are trying to put winter and all the snow, cold winds and short, dreary days behind us. Like our grief, these days of winter are dark and make us feel so isolated from everyone and everything around us and we desperately want the warmth and sunshine of spring and relief from the terrible pain we experience in grieving.

El Nino has played havoc with our weather, causing terrible rains, high winds and snow in the different parts of our country. *El Nino* means "the child" or "Christ child." It is as much an atmospheric event as an oceanic one. The winds and the waters communicate with each other half-way around the world.



El Nino, blows hot. It blows cold. It brings fire and rain, feast and famine. El Nino is like a season that comes at irregular intervals and stays for an unspecified period of time. The same way yellow-orange leaves are associated with fall, or snow with winter. During El Nino, there are certain expected changes in climate and weather patterns. These changes, which begin in the tropical Pacific Ocean, have come to define El Nino.

During an El Nino, the normally gusty trade winds, along the equator in the Pacific, fade. As the winds fade, a huge pool of warm water off the coast of Indonesia begins to flow eastward toward the Americas. This warm water heats and adds

moisture to the air above it. This, in turn, alters storm tracks that blow around the world.

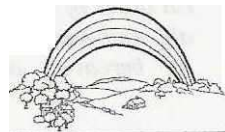


Our grief is certainly like El Nino. Losing our nino (child) has caused violent storms. Our grief first begins with terrible heartache and denial. As the rains (our tears) come, they produce storms that even surprise us. These storms come at irregular intervals and stay for an unspecified period. Our grief is not for a specific duration and we have days when we feast on our memories, but others when we feel the *famine* of our great loss. There is such a *fire* in our hearts that we feel as if there is a physical hole in it where our El Nino resided. What I have found is that Young Jim still resides there and will forever.



But we, fellow travelers, are the winds that communicate with each other even though we are separated by miles. We can share our rains and our storms, and feel the warmth of sharing with each other. We can alter our storm tracks by learning as much as we can about grief, accepting the many emotions it entails and sharing the knowledge we have gained about our grief with other fellow travelers.

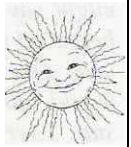
As we progress through our grief trying to find the **middle**, we will experience many storms, but we will also see some rainbows through our tears. Try to find a rainbow as often as you can. It is a sign of hope and a better, tomorrow.



March 20th is the first day of Spring. A poem by Sascha Wagner, TCF, Des Moines, Iowa, reminds us to

## Let a Little Sunshine In:

*Find a little time for spring,  
Even if our days are troubled.  
Let a little sunshine in,  
Let your memories be doubled.*



*Take a little time to see  
All the things your child was seeing  
And your tears will help your heart  
Find a better time for being.*

This prayer by Janis Heil, TCF, Albany, New York, is a challenge to each of us:

*Like Springtime, let me unfold and  
grow fresh and anew from this cocoon of  
grief that has been spun around me.*

*Help me face the harsh reality of sun-  
shine and renewed life, as my bones still  
creak from the winter of my grief*

*Life has dared to go on around me,  
and as I recover from the insult of life's  
continuance, I read just my focus to in-  
clude recovery and growth as a possibility  
in my future. Give me strength to break  
out of the cocoon of my grief*

*But may I never forget it as the place  
where I grew my wings, becoming a new  
person because of my loss.*

Amen

Our grief is like a cloudy day. There is no sunlight for a very long time ... then there is a pinhole of sun light, and as we progress in our grief we see more and more sunlight. We can broaden that pinhole by looking through the clouds for the sun. Hope your pinhole is getting larger each month.



# Grief Grafts

Allen Titlow (5-24-62), the son of Anne Meroney, died as the result of an accidental overdose 3-7-92. Anne gave the following speech at TCF Atlanta Chapter's annual Candlelight Service in December:

## *The Wishing Star*

*The moment I was invited to be your speaker, I started fretting over what I might say that would have meaning to bereaved families at this painful time of year. One morning, my heart told me I would talk with you about my wishing star. Ever since I announce that this would be my subject, I have been running into "wishing stars" all over the place! - my mom sent me a new ornament for the Christmas tree--you push a button and it plays, "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." While surfing around on the Internet, I looked up a new memorial web page on our Wall of Memory; the music that played while I looked at photographs was a wonderful piano rendition of "When You Wish Upon A Star." While going through some of my papers, I came across that wonderful essay by one of our former TCF leaders, Elaine Greer, called "When You Wish Upon A Star," which I know you have read and treasure. My little grandson even has a tippy toy that lights up and plays "Twinkle, Twinkle!" I believe I've been getting some "spiritual messages!" We all know about those, don't we?*

*My son, Allen, died five years ago. This Season marks (my family's sixth Christmas without him. I still miss him so much - just as you must miss your own dear child, or brother or sister or grandchild Thinking about wishing on stars brings to mind some cherished moments from Allen's childhood. When Allen was little, we used to go out into the yard at night. We would spread an old quilt on the grass, and snuggle up together, and look at the stars. Lying there under the sky, looking up into /he blue-blackness of the universe, we would trace the shapes of the constellations with our fingers. I would tell him the stories about each of them from Greek mythology.*

*Allen's favorite constellation was Orion, because it was easy for a little boy to find,*

*being close to the brightest star in the sky. You probably remember the story of Orion, the magnificent hunter stands in the sky, followed by his two hounds, one large and one small.*

*Three bright stars form Orion's belt. From his belt hangs a dagger. According to one version of the ancient story, Orion did not die heroically, chasing down a deer or a lion. Instead, his death was caused by the sting of a scorpion in his heel. Death sneaked up on Orion.*

*The bright middle star in Orion's belt became Allen's own special wishing star. I remember that he said to me one night, after finding that star: "That is where I'll go, when I go up to heaven"*

*I thought silently, even way back then, "I hope I get there first." Because as a mother, as a parent, my worst fear was that "something would happen" to one of my children. I could not put the name to it. I could not say the word, "Death." Not in connection with my child.*

*Years later, after Allen died, during that terrible time when I was buried alive in my own grieving for him, I took to walking under the night sky. I always looked for Orion's belt. I took a small measure of comfort in the memory that Allen, when he was my little boy, said that I might find him there. And I thought of the likeness between Orion and Allen-- Allen grew up into a mighty strong, handsome young man. He, like Orion, loved to hunt--so much so that he and his best friend skipped the turkey dinner every thanks giving to go deer-hunting! Ironically, just as it did with Orion, Death sneaked up on Allen when it was least expected*

*That is the way it is for all of us, when we lose a child, a brother or sister, or a grandchild We never really expect them to die, not deep in our hearts. Not even when they are terminally ill and we acknowledge impending death on an intellectual level. We always believe that they will outlive us, that they will bury us, that we will never have to mourn and grieve for them. We say, "Losing a child is out of the natural order of things." That really says it all. And explains nothing. For most of us bereaved parents and siblings, Death sneaks up on us, and Death comes when it is least expected.*

*The grave importance of the loss of our children to death cannot be measured because of the uniqueness of each of their souls*

*- each one is irreplaceable - no soul is like any other soul. The sense of loss that we feel is also intimate and unique, for we, as parents and children, or as brothers and sisters, or grandparents and grandchildren, love each other in a way that cannot be replicated out in the world.*

*We wish on so many stars for them. We plan so much. .. dream so much. .. expect so much.. want so much. .. for them.*

*There is no way to estimate the magnitude of this tragedy in our own lives --losing of a child to Death. All we know is that we are forever changed by it. We are never the same after it happens, and we will never be the same again Fortunately, the incredible pain that we feel at first does eventually soften. Fortunately, with the passage of time, we become able to add happy memories about our children to the sad memories that surround us in the beginning. Fortunately, through this terrible tragedy, most of us grow (you may not believe it, but it really is true!). But we never, ever return to where we were the day before our child or sibling died*

*We are given illustrations in the Bible, in literature, and in history that show, in bits and pieces, how the Death of a child is the greatest loss we can ever suffer.*

*Take the **Book of Job** in the **Old Testament**, for example. Job lost all of his children in a whirlwind that came while they were feasting at the home of one of their siblings. Thereafter, Job never mentioned their names again. Scholars might tell you that this fact shows that, for Job, his children no longer existed. As a bereaved parent, however, I don't buy that. In my view, Job never spoke the names of his children again after their deaths because their memory, embodied in their names, became so sacred as to be unpronounceable -just as the name of God had no pronunciation because of its sacredness to mankind.*

*One among the ten plagues of Israel recited at the Passover Seder is "the death of the firstborn child" There are locust and frogs among the ten*

.....and boils and showers of the death of the firstborn is the of the plagues that deals with .....of a soul -- our loss of a child .....

.....er star that comes to mind is .....star that the wise men fol- .....Bethlehem. Their failure to re..... to Herod caused him to have .....children in Bethlehem and its ..... aged two and under, slaughter.... effort to circumvent the precoming of the King of the Jew's -- Josiah Can you imagine all of..... f that this evil king caused? .....literature, we get the same message about being bereaved parents. ....Marilyn Dorn Staats' first novel, .....ng for Atlanta, the heroine is a..... who lost a child to death thir.....ars before, and the effect of that upon her. Staats, incidentally, is a bereaved parent.

...an Koontz, in his latest novel, **Sole Survivor**, even involves *The Compassionate Friends*!

....cannot imagine how the death of a child has influenced the course of .....ry. Just looking at the Presidents of our country alone is significant:

Did you know that nearly half of our presidents and their wives were (and are bereaved parents? Several of them more than one child. Some of them lost children while in office. Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln had sons, Edward, age 4, and William age 11. After Lincoln's assassination, Mrs. Lincoln suffered the death of another son, Thomas, age 18. (No ..nder history records Mrs. Lincoln as .....zy!)

Grover Cleveland's oldest daughter, ....th, died at age 13.

In our own time, John and Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy lost their infant son, Patrick.

George and Barbara Bush lost their daughter, Robin, to cancer.

How can we calculate the meaning of the death of a sibling? - This is the least studied of all losses, and this, the least understood.

We recently heard in the impassioned eulogy of a brother for Diana, Princess of Wales. "She was not a saint. She had her struggles. But she was good, and we will carry on for her." And carry on we all do, at least to outside observers - isn't that true?

And then a line from the song that Elton John sang at her funeral: "Diana, your name is written in the star." My dear friends, the names of all of our children, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren are written in the stars.

So, like my precious son Allen, who selected the middle star in Orion's belt as his wishing star, I have made that star my wishing star, too. Some of my wishes have come true. One wish that I have made, along with many other people, is that others, as they get farther along in their healing, would come forward to dedicate their time, talents, and resources to comforting and holding up bereaved families. A part of this wish is that the quality of caring and support that we give to our fellow travelers through *The Compassionate Friends* would be increased by the return of bereaved parents of what they accepted in a time of even greater need. This wish has come true ten times over in the Atlanta Area *Compassionate Friends*.

I will share some of the other wishes that I have made on that star in Orion's belt. I know that some of my wishes will not come true, but I shall continue, undaunted, to "wish them" anyway, because wishing on wishing stars is like praying prayers - prayers are granted and wishes come true in all kinds of ways wonderful and unexpected ways.

I have wished for an end to the terrible pain of grieving, both for myself and for you.

I have wished that others would understand what it is like to lose a child, and not give their sympathy, but give, instead, their empathy.

I have wished that no one who is grieving the loss of a loved one should be disenfranchised because society does not fully understand the relationship.

I have wished to feel joy once again. I wish that for you, too,

I hope wished I could overcome my sorrow so that I can be a better parent to my living children. I wish that you, too, can overcome your sorrow to love and support your living children.

I have wished that parents who have lost their only child, and siblings who have lost their only brother or sister, will receive all of the love and tenderness that we can show them.

I have wished that no other parents would have to give up their children to disease, to drunkards, to murderers,

to drugs, to evil, to careless others, to accidents, to any cause or lack of cause. I fervently repeal this wish in complete awe and fear every time I meet newly bereaved parents and siblings at the door of a *Compassionate Friends* meeting.

I have wished that all of our hearts would heal faster, and that all of our faiths will be fully restored.

I have wished, and this is my most precious wish, that we will all be together with our children in eternity what a wonderful meeting that will be."

So, my friends, as we gather here at the beginning of this holiday season to remember those we love. I am wishing upon my star, and praying, that you will have peace. When you make a wish all your star in loving memory of your sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, grandchildren, please know that you are not alone: your *Compassionate Friends* are wishing right along with You!



Allen's symbol is a buck.

James and Malissia Hardison's son, James (3-3-84) died from an aneurysm, 11-13-96. Malissia explains:

It has been a very hard week for us, and a hard year through. But with God's help and good friends we will make it. We just make it day by day.

I would like to tell you about our special Angel. James Edward Hardison II.

James had a lot of problems when he was born, but with God's help and a lot of prayers he over came most of them. The doctors said James would never walk, but he walked when he was about 4 years old. They also said he would never go to regular school, but he did. James was a miracle child. He refused to give up.

James was our only child He was the joy of our lives. He never complained that he could not do all the things that other children could do. He loved life.

*He was an adorable, likable, and loving little boy.*

*James was 12 years old and attended Greenbrier Middle School 6th grade. He always had a big smile all his face. He loved to go to school. James was all the A, B, Honor Roll all of the time. He loved to read. He bought books all of the time. James could spell anything. He always made an A+/100 on all of his spelling tests. James didn't want to even miss a day of school when he was sick.*

*James was a Dallas Cowboy fan, he watched them all of time on TV. He also loved country music, and wanted to be either a country music singer or a DJ so he could play country music when he grew up. James was everything to us, we loved him more than anything. James came first in our lives. He liked every one he saw and they liked (loved) him. The kids at school had a hard week last week. James touched so many lives. I just hope and pray that people will not forget him. I worry about that a lot. I know that his father and I will never forget him. We wish we could have our little angel back every day*

*We have been going to a local support group and it helps us a lot, but we have a long way to go. We read our Lamentations as soon as we get it. It helps a lot to read and talk to others who have been there and that they do to help get through the days, nights and holidays. It is very hard just to get through the days. Holidays will always be very hard.*

*This is a poem that I wrote for our local newspaper 11/12/97 for James' anniversary:*

*In Loving Memory of James  
Edward Hardison II  
3/3/84 – 11/13/96*

*You left us a year ago, son.  
You joined God I know.*

*You are happy and free from fear, but oh,  
we still miss you so.*

*You taught us to laugh and love  
through life's good and bad  
Now you look at us from above through  
good times and sad*

*I know you're in Heaven now, free of  
pain, loneliness and sorrow.*

*But I wish you were by our sides to go for  
one more ride tomorrow*

*But one day, I'll again see that loving  
angel's face.*

*To rest high on that mountain, son; your  
work on earth is done.*

*Always remembered with love.*

*Mama & Daddy,  
Family & Friends*



*James' symbols are an angel and football because they always called him their little angel and be loved football, and the Dallas Cowboys.*

*Luke (9-18-78), son of Nim and Clara Patterson, died from an accidental gunshot, 9-12-94. Luke's cousin wrote this essay about his cousin, Luke:*

*My cousin Roman Cassidy brought me a copy of his college paper he had written about Luke the other day. It touched me so much that I really wanted to share it. I have copied it as is. Luke and Roman were second cousins, the same age, and in the same grade. It has taken this long for him to reveal his feeling about Luke to us. Roman would come by and see us and check on us, but he never really talked about how he felt and he said the only way he could share his feelings was to write it down.*

*I continue to be so very thankful for my fellow travelers, we have met so many friends. Last fall we went down and visited the Whites in Springfield, TN. They treated us like family and made us so very welcome. We are looking forward to going down and spending a few days again this fall. I feel so blessed to have met these new friends, we have lost so many friends since Luke's accident. I have spoken to many of our old friends and ask why they don't keep in touch anymore. Many have conveyed that they are not comfortable around us and are afraid they will say the wrong thing to us. I had one of my friends tell me we didn't have anything in common anymore because I didn't have a son playing basketball anymore. We have really taken a second look at some of our friends. It hurls so deeply to know people really feel like this.*

*The void Nim and I still feel is still so large and painful sometimes I wonder if we can bear it. In September it will be four*

*years since we lost Luke and yet sometimes I get that scared feeling, and my stomach jumps like we have just lost him.*

*We are already looking forward to J.I.M.'s picnic. Our love to all fellow travelers.*

**A Relative Peace**  
**By: Roman Cassidy**

*What is time? I believe that we all ponder this thought at least once in our lives. Time can be all experience, a place, or a relationship. However, it is an object that we cannot hold or touch. If we could, I think that we all would like to push the rewind button a couple of times. I know I would bring back the loved ones that I've lost.*

*Relationships are all developed, measured, and ended by time. It is difficult to comprehend these relationships with the analogy of time. After all, time is relative. We obviously had to relate it to something or some theory. Time is like everything else. Any object that is a measuring standard is nothing but relevant to a belief that was convenient to an ancient philosopher in his day and age. I think that we can all vie for the fact that time needs to last a little longer. Just five more minutes in an hour would give us long enough time in the day to get everything done for tomorrow.*

*Maybe our problem with insufficient time is just that. We organize our schedules that tomorrow are coming. In my cousin's case, he did just that. Luke had his schedule made for tomorrow's school day, but he never took for granted that tomorrow was coming. He spent every day like it would be his last. Making his friends laugh and making sad people happy were all just part of his daily routine. Luke practiced and played basketball like it would be the last time he would pick up a ball. Once in his short life, he was promised not ever to play basketball again. He proved everyone wrong when he overcame his injury in his fractured arm. As a freshman in high school, he was a varsity stand-out on the court and in the lives of his teachers and friends.*

Life as a freshman in high school was perfect for me, and I couldn't ask for it to be better. My time and place in the small city of Corbin was comfortable. A daily routine was kept by going to school, football practice, and spending time with my friends and family. I got to play with my family and cousins every day, because we all lived on the same hill. Those days, we would get into trouble for playing basketball too late at night.

Since Luke and I were the same age, we basically spent all of our time together when the family met. When we were young, he lived about fifteen miles away from me and went to a different school. However, in the seventh grade, he moved to Corbin and we went to the same school. It took a little time, but eventually my friends became his friends. We played basketball on the same team. Some people were jealous because he was better than they were, but Luke's persistence to become friends with them paid off. Everyone soon loved Luke. It was commonly difficult to find a seat around him at the lunch table.

Within a year, Luke's family moved to a house on my street. Our street was beautiful. Luke's house was directly in front of a pond where we fished. Trees drooped over the road. It was almost like there wasn't supposed to be pavement there cutting through the green grass and through the orchard of trees. The pavement discontinued by the circle it created directly in front of my house. It would not be right if the road extended into the deep woods that surrounded my house. Those woods purified our innocence with my younger cousins, and it hosted many egg wars with Luke and our friends. The street where we lived is still a sanctuary of our childhood in relation to the small world we've been accustomed to.

Our curiosity had grown as Luke and I did. As children, it seemed like every time I went to his house he would drag me to the landfill owned by my family. I will never know why, but I always went with him to play in the trash. Very seldom he would want to go inside and play Atari like I did. Later in life, we were curious about more complex things, then we had girlfriends. However, Luke was interested in guns and hunting, just like my father, uncles and I

were. Often we would hunt, but our mother's security seemingly kept us away from guns. Luke's curiosity with guns literally killed him. It is hard to comprehend why and how a life could be taken so easily as Luke's.

Anyway, Luke's existence in high school helped me out a lot. We had just become freshmen and grasping the whole concept would've been difficult by myself. As always, Luke helped me and my classmates out every day. School was going fine. Football practice was hard, but games were worth it. I no longer played all the basketball team with Luke, because I was too divided between the two sports. Anyway, we still played about once a week with our two younger cousins who lived on our street.

The first few weeks of high school came and went. We were finally used to it, and everything was fine. However, I will never forget the last day he was here. At school, everything was normal as usual. I remember sitting by him at lunch with all of our friends. Afterwards, he asked us for a cherry Life-Saver that he was never without. I look one like everyone else did, and Luke gave us all high-fives as he turned and left for class. He turned away slowly and smiled like he always did.

The last class of the day was over and I went to football practice that I was dreading because Monday practices were terrible. As soon as I got home, my two little cousins, who are girls, called me and asked if I would play basketball with them at their house. They said that they called Luke and he didn't want to play because he had just gotten out of practice himself. I told them "no" also, because I was tired and my girlfriend was supposed to come over and get me. As soon as I got my shorts and T-shirt on, the beginning of the end occurred. I walked past my storm door and heard the worst yelling I ever heard in my life. Luke's father was screaming to God why this had happened. I did not know anything. My instincts were to see what was going on, and I ran down the road barefooted.

I did not make it all the way to the house before I knew what had happened. The big pine tree that we used to climb was separating my view of his father. His father silenced when I arrived. We were the only two there in the grass weeping. Not soon after, people came. 'Til this day

day I will never know who comforted me in the front yard, I did not know that anyone or anything had existed at this point. However, as I glanced at the road, I saw my girlfriend drive by. She kept on going and I saw her pass again to leave our road. I didn't know if she stopped or not, I just walked back home after the police arrived I was home by myself and the phone started ringing and never stopped. My best friend called and that is all I knew who called. He came to my house and walked me up to Luke's house, which I could not see from the conglomeration of people that surrounded his house.

Time seemed to pass by forever that night and at school the next day. However, the same people that Luke made happier when sad made me happy that Tuesday at school. It was a bittersweet ending for a life for short. His presence and lessons not to take life for granted will ever be forgotten. Time still lives and always will as long as we put a battery in a clock and set it in relation to another.

Luke's symbol is a basketball with wings and #000



Melody Claxton Powers (1-1-76), the daughter of Ron and Carol Leach, was killed in an automobile accident, 11-1-97. February 3, 1998, the Baptist Regional Medical Center Clinical Laboratory held a memorial service for Melody at the hospital where she worked. Several of the people that worked with her shared some of their thoughts, observations, remembrances and memories:

Melody was always smiling, even when she worked with her hand injured, she still smiled. Deborah Peace

Melody was so pleasant to be around, there are some people you just enjoy, she was one of them. June Wagers

It was a joy working with and getting to know Melody. She always

*had a smile every morning. I feel privileged to have had the chance to be around her, even if only for a short while.*

Leila Cromer

*I knew Melody from before, when she was small. Even then she had that long blonde hair and I remember her riding in a go-cart with her hair flowing out in back in the breeze. The last day she worked, she and I had breakfast together with Tina and some others. I was eating hot sauce on my eggs and Melody was trying the hot sauce on hers also. She kept taking bite after bite, but could not decide if she liked it or not. Tina teased her and said that you would usually know if you liked something before it was all gone. She teased me about being little and I told her she was tiny also. She said she had a hard time finding clothes to fit as she was so tall, yet small.*

Karen Peace

*I remember the last day she worked, someone ask her if she was going up to Lily to put her application in at that factory. She said emphatically, "NO", I love my job here and I'm not going anywhere else.*

Kim Helton

*She was really a fan, she was after my man. (We all know Cleda's man is Rick Pitino)*

Cleda Parks

*The first time I saw her I said, "Finally someone is taller than me." She fit in like she had been here forever. She could just walk up and join in the conversation. She was thrifty. She talked about how romantic Rusty was. He would have been gone for awhile on the road, she would come home from work, and he would have a picnic set out for her, with some flowers, music and wine.*

Linda Gilreath

*I remember one patient we had while Melody was here; this patient was an elderly woman and like some elderly patients when they are sick, she was ornery and sort of hateful. She just hated when we even came into her room. She wouldn't let anyone stick her for labs, so this one time, Melody went to try to talk to her into it, and it ended up that Melody knew this lady's nephew. Well, this lady didn't get to see her nephew much and she got to find out how he*

*was and everything from Melody. She let Melody stick her and from then on, Melody would go each time she had labs. She was really good with the patients.*

Tammy Johnson

*The world is full of all types of people today, but the ones most remembered are the ones who do bad. Very rarely are good things brought out, but very few bad things could even be thought of where Melody was concerned. An angel's heart in an earthly body; that's the way most will remember her. Although her days were short in number, her grace and concerns for others were enormous Much loved and much missed, another angel in God's choir.*

Becky Pennington

*Melody was the type of person you will never forget and always remember. Every time I see SNOOPY, gold banana clips, or a packed lunch, like us she couldn't survive on hospital food. Everything she saw with Snoopy on it, she wanted to order and, lastly, she was forever putting her hair up in that gold banana clip. She was a loving and caring person always putting the patient first. She was also a family person. I don't think a night went by that she didn't think she was going to get to keep her cat in her new apartment. She said she was going to call her dad and see if he knew what she could do. He wrote her a note to tell the landlord and low and behold, she got to keep the cat. I will always remember Melody for the person she was, always there when you needed her, always there to kid around with, and just always there.*

Lisa Snyder

*Melody was a wonderful person. She and I went through orientation together and started work at the same time. Melody was a very beautiful person in a lot of ways. She was always so kind to everyone, and really cared about people's feelings. She really loved her job, and loved helping people, she was really good with the patients, especially the elderly. Working with Melody was always fun. She was always doing things to make people laugh, and have a good time. She always had a smile on her face. Melody and I got close during the last during the lost few months. We shared a lot of thoughts and feelings with each other, we had automatic trust between us. She was always sending me mail boxes just to say 'hi' or if I had a*

*stressful day, she would do something to make me laugh. I miss her very much, she will be in my thoughts and in my heart forever.*

Tina Eversole

*I remember the first time I saw Melody, I thought to myself, what is this young lady doing here, she could be a model. Everything about Melody was so attractive, her features, her hair. She would come in and go straight to her locker and the first thing she would do was reach up and twist her hair up with a clip or a barrette, no mirror, just twist it up. It would be gorgeous, she just had that knack and that look. I would look at her, looking for some imperfection, thinking that no one's features could be that flawless. I never found any.*

Donna Ledington

*Melody was a whole lot of things, she was pleasant, happy, carefree, young, tall, slim, beautiful, energetic, graceful, lovable, charming, delightful, cheerful, dynamic, industrious, strong, spirited; the list could go on and all. If limited to only one word, it would be Winsome.*

Paula Lacefield

*Melody was a very sweet, beautiful person with a wonderful personality. It was always a great joy to work with her. She was always the first to help her coworkers and patients with no questions asked and she always had a smile on her face. The world needs more Melodys.*

Lynn Wright

*I remember one time when she worked with us all third shift. She had on the most wonderful perfume. I asked her what fragrance it was and she told me this story about an aunt of hers that always gave her the last bit of perfume in any bottle that she had. She said this particular perfume was Tiffany's. She was going to bring me the bottle so I could see what the bottle looked like and I might be able to find it easier. I haven't found it yet and if I ever do, I know I wouldn't be able to wear it without thinking of Melody.*

Joi Gilbert

*Melody and I talked a lot about cats. She had a cat and so did I. My cat was older than hers, so I was the experienced cat person. I told her what kind of kitty litter to buy, and we talked about training cats, she 'was having sort of a hard time with hers. Her dad told me Melody always wanted a cat and they couldn't have one because he was allergic. Melody always gave me advice about men. So I gave her cat advice, she gave me men advice. You see she had a cat, I didn't have a man.*

Tammy Mastin

*I'm really not sure where to begin. There's just so much I could say about Melody. I knew from the first time I met her, she has always been nice to me. No matter where I would be, she would see me out and she would grab me and hug me. She 'would always say, "I'd love to do what you do, can you help me get a job?" I told her I'd never tried to get anyone a job, but I'd do what I could. I told her we had strict policies on being late and calling in, and I knew Melody liked to get out like I did, so I told her I'd kick her tail if she let me down. She never did either. Melody was one of the best workers we had, you could really depend all her. I had just moved into my trailer, and I told everyone I wanted blinds for my birthday. She came out for my birthday, brought me a really nice card, and some blinds. She was really fun to be around. There's just so much to remember about her, that's what makes it so hard to accept our loss. She was a wonderful person and will always be missed.* Tammy Howard

*A precious young life gone, a life that was just beginning.* Doris Cathers

*Even though most of us in the lab only knew Melody for a short time, it was long enough to develop some very fond memories. I often think of her leaving the break room when she was ready to go home and letting her hair down from the clip. She would shake her head a time or two and it would fall into place perfectly. I always thought 'what gorgeous hair.' Melody always seemed so caring about her co-workers as well as our patients. I will always remember the day she helped me look through the*

*garbage can hunting for my watch. Things like this truly showed what a caring person she was. I miss her.*

Lois Goins

*Although I am at BRMC only one day a week, as a student, there are two things I always noticed about Melody. She was always hard working, and she always had a smile. That is a combo that can't be beaten, and something that we all can learn from every day. Thanks for the lesson Melody.*

Kojak Graves

*I will always remember Melody as nice, friendly and especially funny. Every time I saw Melody she had a ready smile for everyone. Those smiles are what I see when I think of her, I see Melody's smiles.* Kathy Marsee

*Melody was a very consoling, considerate and compassionate person. I remember being with her in a patient's room, the patient was worried and scared and Melody took the time to talk with her and had her smiling before we left. She did this with each patient and I know today she was an angel in our midst who has been granted her wings in heaven.* Beverly McGowen

*Melody was quiet and warm spirited .Even though she was 21, she walked a quiet trail we call life. She wanted everyone to like her and in doing so, she possessed a true and real childlike spirit that surrounded her and whoever was fortunate to come in contact with that spirit, shared a very warm and unforgettable experience. That's why we had such a hard time dealing with her absence. It was because we had gotten accustomed to it and without her we had only a void there now. In the native scheme of things, she was to us like a summer breeze is to the prairie grass as it sways the grass over in a warm gentle way, so will her memories sway our hearts never seen, but always present.*

Jerry Oney

*I didn't know her very well, but I remember she would come in to work, take a sticking list, come back and go again. She was a really good worker, she never complained.* Brenda Byrd

*Even though I had very little contact with her, I noticed that she worked very*

*hard. She had initiative, and a lot of potential. She was always pleasant.*

Christy Baker

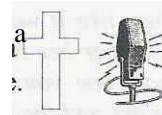
Melody's symbol is an Angel.



Bryan Clark (1-26-72), the son of Bill and Loretta, was killed in an automobile accident, 2-23-96. Loretta shared:

*I put off writing because it's all so hard to face. Our Bryan has been gone 2 years, February 23. I have it marked on my calendar as his "homecoming." Thank God for His promises. Our daughter, Kim, had her 31st birthday the 24th. I[am going to always try to make it more special for her. We are fortunate to have 3 daughters and a son still with us. God bless.*

Bryan's symbols are a



cross and a microphone. Frank and Gail Noble's son, Chad, (1-1-74) died in an automobile accident, 3-9-91; their other son, Jason, (10-25-76), died in an auto accident 7-12-97.

*I have enclosed a picture of Chad and Jason that J had put together. I know that they will always be together. I'm taking a computer class at Lee's College this semester. I'm learning about Windows 95 and Office '97. I needed to take this class for my job. In November, I will have worked 24 years. My older sister will be retiring in August. She is going to take care of her grandson. I get to hold him sometimes. He was born November 5, 1997.*

Chad's symbol is praying hands<sup>s</sup> and Jason's symbols are birds.



Sue Wilson's daughter, Taiann (11-3-79), was murdered with her boyfriend, Matt Coomer (8-17-78), 8-31-95. Sue asked Tai's friends if they would share their thoughts of her. Her friend Jessie shared this letter:

Dearest Sue,

Hey how are you? Me? Pretty good, I guess. I really don't know what to write. I know you said just a couple of lines on how Tai's death affected me. Do you want it in a letter or a poem?

I really have had a bad week. I mean here the past couple of days, actually weeks, I have just thought about her and thought about her. I will be 17 soon and I now realize, she can't celebrate it with me. I sometimes wish that it was me that died and not her so she could still be here, spreading cheer and happiness.

I know Tai is always with me, but not like I want it. I really feel a part of me died with her. It's a part of me that will never be replaced. I remember one time she wrote me a note and it said, "Jessie, I want you to store all of our memories in your head, and never let them go. "I can remember from the first time I met her, to the last time I saw her, like it was yesterday. I also remember her telling me a true friend is someone you can stay away from for years and the next time you met it's like you haven't even been apart. That is how she and I were.

I know I can't change the past, I wish I could, but I can't, but I can change the future. I made a vow to her the other day that I will succeed in life, and I will see her again. No one understands how close we were. No matter if we didn't talk at times. There was always a special bond between us. I miss her so much.

Well, I guess I better close. I love you dearly. You take care of yourself, and keep me in your prayers.

Sincerely,  
1-22-97 Jessie

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



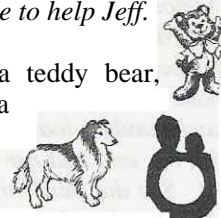
Cecil and Jolene Hutchinson lost their only child, Anne Haake (10-10-67) and their grandson, Paxton (5 weeks old), in an automobile accident, 6-27-96. Jolene shared about her son-in-law, Jeff who has moved to North Carolina with their grandchild:

Jeff is seeking employment now. (He hasn't worked since April) This is good.

Also, Jeff has started attending church. We are also thankful for this. We feel that these are good signs of Jeff's starting to heal. Since Jeff has been in the Asheville area, he has met Maury Scobee who works with Billy Graham and is invited to a surprise birthday party this weekend for Maury. Jeff told me that the Grahams are supposed to be at the party as Billy Graham's office is arranging the get together. Jeff seemed excited about this. We feel that once Jeff gets back to work and gets more involved in his new church, that he will be better.

And, you know how God works. Bent Creek Baptist Church, where Jeff is now going, has called a new pastor. The man is 37 years old and lost his wife and one of his two children in an accident. I just know that this mall will be able to help Jeff.

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



Shelby (2-13-74), the son of Jaybo and Rowena Warner, died due to complications from Hodgkin's Disease, 10-28-92. Theresa Noe, Shelby's sister, shared her thoughts about Brandon Coldiron who died, 11-5-97. He was a friend of Shelby's and I loved her observations of our children:

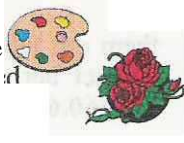
Brandon was very much like our children. He was very outgoing, big smile, great personality. Barbara and I shared the stories about our loved ones that will be in Rosemary's hook. We read Shelby's, Ralphie and Heather's stories written by their families. As I sat there reading, I thought about many traits that our kids share that I really hadn't thought about before. Each of these were also found in Brandon and, from everything I've read about young Jim, he shares the same. Each of them had great outgoing personalities, big smiles they were all around the same age, either just out of high school or just about to be. As I tried to picture in my memory what each one looked like, I saw some things that I had never thought out before. They were all very neat, well dressed, clean cut teenagers. One thing that I kept seeing in

each of them was the big smile they each shared, but in each of those smiles were beautiful teeth (almost perfect in all of them) and something that always catches my eye, DIMPLES. Each of them had deep dimples in their cheeks and even some in their chins. All of them were looked up to by their classmates, peers and all of the adults who shared in their lives. They were all children lovers. Each of them never failing to take the opportunity to play with small children who looked up to them.

As I thought about this I realized that the list could go all and all. All of these things that they shared. Brandon was a great guy. He cared so much for everyone. Always having time to say "Hi" and to pass you a big hug no matter how many other people were with us. Shelby and Brandon shared many of the same things during the deaths also, even though they didn't die the same way. They were the same age, they both died on Wednesday, buried on Saturday. Both were the youngest children in their families. They were both buried a very short distance from their homes. Valentine's Day was a very important day to them. Brandon has never missed a day (Valentines) giving me flowers or candy since I started working at his school several years ago. Shelby always did the same, but always expecting the same 100. They also shared something else, on Friday, February 13th. That very important date to all of us in their families, Shelby's 24th birthday and Senior Night at the ball game at our High School. During half time of the games the senior, and their parents will be introduced. Brandon was a very good guard (#11) on our basketball team, but his parents haven't been able to attend any games this year as it is too difficult yet. But they were there Friday night on Shelby's birthday as Brandon's framed uniform was retired and placed in our school lobby. So the list goes on with the things they share.

Sorry I didn't mean to ramble on, I just got carried away, thinking about our kids.

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



David and Cindy Jo Greever's daughter, Michelle (8-24-84), was struck by a car 11-5-93. Cindy shared some of her dreams:

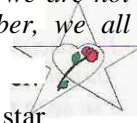
*I wanted to share, with you, the last three dreams I had of Michelle in the past month or so. They are all so very special and sweet, just as she wrote in her last letter to me the week before she parted. I guess even in my dreams Michelle is there to remind me that she is very much alive, having been born to eternal life on November 5, 1993. Anyway, I think I had shared some of these but I want to go into greater detail. These dreams I believe Michelle wants me to share in detail with you, too, so here goes!*

*In the first dream over a month ago it is full color. It is summer out, sunny, and a gorgeous day. I hear a baby crying and turn to see a small trailer parked out front by our water spigot. In the window I see a baby of maybe one year, sitting in a small plastic bath tub, on the table. I see Michelle steadying the baby repeatedly as the baby keeps trying to get its balance. Michelle picks up the baby and holds it in her arms like a mother and gently comes out and walks toward me, slowly and maturely, serenely. Michelle is wearing one of her favorite pink and white thin cotton summer dresses with a matching vest. She walks up to me as I walk towards her and we meet. I am SO surprised to see her and SO happy, I cry out, "Michelle, I have missed you since you died!!" She looks at me almost in disbelief and very puzzled, but sweetly, and she says, "Mommy, I didn't die!"*

*In the second dream, Melissa, Michelle and I are out and about in my car, as we so often were when Michelle was alive. All of a sudden, my car slams into reverse; I can't stop it!! I ask Melissa to help me stop it, she says she can't!! I am looking "backwards" through the rear window of my car and I see that we are going to hit a dock! We are NOT going to stop! We go over the dock and plunge into the water! Suddenly, my car becomes*

*convertible and I think it will sink, but it floats, 'just like a boat'. So the girls and I are floating, we are all fine! It is a beautiful day and this dream is also in color. I look in the back seat and notice my BIBLE is taking on water, but we are not sinking! That is all I remember, we all lived through this.*

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



Leslie Tietsort's son, Jeremy (6-20-77) completed suicide on April 25, 1994. The Tietsort family shared their Christmas newsletters that they had sent to family and friends. It included several poems:

#### 1994

*This newsletter is really a tough , it is in MEMORY of JEREMY. Our hearts have literally been broken and crushed in 1994. We want to share just a little of our pain and sufferings with you. It has been a year of tests, struggles and hurts. Through a glimpse of our pain and suffering, we have gotten closer to Jesus. "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. If God is for us, who call be against us? He who did not spare His own son, but gave Him up for us all. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution of famine or nakedness or danger of sword? For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither present nor future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

*We had Jeremy a short 4 months this year. He was 16, Junior, 5'9, 145 lb.. (lost) He was all signed up for his SAT's and talking about college. He quit working at Pee Wee's in March and went back to full period classes. He quit football in September. He wrecked his Blazer in March. He got in a fight with his girlfriend Tauni. Then all the "why's"??? Suicide. April 25, 1994, and the story continues on. We are living*

*survivors each day through his pain and suffering of the decision he made. It has changed all five of us. We will never be the same. If only he would have talked. This is the message we need to get out. All five of us are trying to find our path and work through our intense grief. It hurts so badly. We want him back soooo bad Jeremy's lesson of love taught us so much about love and acceptance of life. We are all trying to find a reason to sort it all out. If he only knew how badly we hurt, but he does know and sees us. Nothing can ever take away our precious memories.*

*We feel like we have entered what some call the fraternity of bereaved parents, a quest we didn't choose but God did. How do we carry on? By learning and trusting. It would be the easy way to give up. We are hanging on by faith.*

#### BUTTERFLY

*The shell of a butterfly breaks free. The dead shell of the cocoon sits still. It begins to wiggle. The house of the butterfly suddenly pops the most magnificent, colorful, butterfly. The butterfly flutters and flies away and we don't see it. Free to another world. Death is not the end, Jeremy you are as the butterfly: FREE. In the warmth of the sunshine and beautiful flowers.*

#### SUICIDE

*Doors opened  
Doors closed  
The question  
The Why  
Impulse  
Act on  
Finish  
Done  
Free  
Never to come back!*

#### BURSTING HEARTS

*The bursting heart knows despair. It is the soul that does not care. Tenderly blessing the dark shadows. Bleak sorrow the bursting heart knows, relentless torture to the soul. Desperation true to the soul. Bursting, savage, pounding, ripped apart with violence and truth.*

Though hideous torture the heart endures.

### GRIEF

*The grief comes knocking at the door.  
It comes in many faces, anger, hurt,  
isolation, denial, despair, "why's"? As I  
look at each face perplexed and fearful of  
what I might see, I try to hide the grief  
that follows me all day long, until the  
night. Where can I run? Nowhere it is  
always there, sleep is impossible. The  
mind is running through the treadmill,  
won't let go. The "why's" come in  
blasting, sweet Jeremy, why wouldn't you  
open up and let us help you with the  
pain and suffering? You have left us a  
fractured heart, wounded, not all there.  
The five of us are left to never finish your  
story, only to carry your pain and your  
unanswered questions.*

1997

*It has been 3 years since Jeremy left us  
and we have a huge whole and lots of  
pain. But there is healing in store for us  
if we trust, wait and allow God to heal our  
deep pain Yes, our lives have changed.  
We are moving on and trying to  
understand all the "why's"?? We are  
different and we do choose to live life to  
the very fullest.*

### SOLITUDE

*A solitude is a place where I can go sit  
quietly and breath deeply. It can be  
anywhere. It brings a quiet stilling to my  
busy soul A solitude brings a peace that  
passeth all understanding, deep within my  
soul. In solitude I reflect, for all the  
bountiful blessings that I have. It feels  
good to go in to my soul and find that  
solitude.*

### QUILTING

*In my hand I begin I cut, snip, piece and  
sew all the patchwork squares into being.  
A rainbow of colors pleasing to my eye. A  
quilt is born. Needle in my hand, thimble  
on my finger. I pull the fabric tightly over  
the hoop, up and down goes an inch. My  
finger is pricked and bloody. Hours and  
hours go by and still not done. As the quilt  
comes into being as my life unfolds before  
me. My life is as the quilt; cut, ripped,  
pieced, torn. The master is quilting my  
life.*

Jeremy's symbols are fireworks.



Craig (1-14-70), the soil of Joel and Judy Blumsack, was killed in an automobile accident 5-4-94. The following poem has been a very inspirational poem for the family:

*I've dreamed many dreams  
That never came true.  
I've seen them vanish at dawn.  
But, I've realized enough of my dreams,  
Thank God, to make me want to dream  
on.*

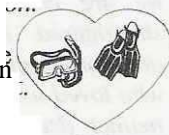
*I've prayed many prayers,  
When no answers came,  
Though I waited patient and long, But  
answers come to enough of my  
prayers  
To make me keep praying on.*

*I've trusted many a friend that failed,  
And left me to weep alone,  
But I found enough of my friends'  
true blue  
To make me keep trusting on.*

*I've sown many seeds that fell by the way  
For the bird, to feed upon,  
But I have held enough golden sheaves in  
my hands  
To make me keep sowing on.*

*I've drained the cup of disappointment  
and pain  
And gone many days without song,  
But, I've sipped enough nectar from the  
roses of life  
To make me want to live on.*

Craig's symbols are goggles, fins and a heart.



Two sons of Luther and Rosemary Smith, Drew (4-27-74) and Jeremiah (7-4-77), were killed in an automobile accident, 7-23-92. Rosemary has channeled her grief, and has found a ministry in contacting recently bereaved parents and giving them the hope that they will survive. She also sends information that will help them in their grief journey. Most of you know Rosemary and know of her wonderful ministry. If you know of newly bereaved parents, please let Rosemary or me know so we can surround them our fellow

travelers. You may contact her at her E-mail address: **105660.633@compuserve.com**

Great news!! The Smiths now have a web page about Drew and Jeremiah and the dome in their memory at Cumberland College. I hope each of you will "visit" the site, [www.childrenofdome.com](http://www.childrenofdome.com). Be sure to sign the guest book!! Rosemary will be our speaker at J.I.M.'s Picnic, June 6. Her book, *Children of the Dome*, will not be ready by June, but she will be sharing the book and her grief journey with us. When you see her web site, you will see some of the pictures that will be included in the book. She is such a special person and friend.

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



If you have not sent me your E-mail address, you may reach me at **dinah@cc.cumber.edu**. If you would like others to have your Email address, let me know and I will include it in the newsletter. It is such a convenient way to stay in contact with each other. See you in cyberspace!

There is an Irish quote:

### Maireann croi eadrom i bhfad

(A light heart lives long)



May March 17th be designated as the day you have to do something for yourself that will make your heart a little lighter. Everyone should wear green on that day, and since many of us bum green candles for remembrance and growth, let the green remind you to spend the day growing and remembering the many wonderful memories you have.



When Irish eyes are *smiling*, they are probably enjoying a delicious piece of **chocolate!**