



LAMENTATIONS



Issue 68

Middle

May, 1998

The Merry, Marry Month of May ...

Not quite on the "merry," but right on the "marry." May is one of the toughest months of the year for Jim and me. **Merry** means: *pleasure, delight, jovial, carefree innocence. Marked by or offering fun and gaiety.* **Marry** means: *to take as a spouse; to wed; to unite in a close and usually permanent relationship. An archaic definition is used for emphasis and especially to express amused or surprised agreement.*

May is no longer a very "merry" month for us, but continues to be a "marry" month for us.

Mother's Day, 1991, was one of the happiest days for our family. Young Jim went with me to see my Mother who was in a nursing home. After Jim's death that year, a reporter for our local paper wrote:

Words written on a page, or spoken from a television, or from person to person cannot adequately express the condolences to families that have experienced the loss of a young life.

However, my limited experience with James H. Taylor. If was just that, very limited. Still, I have a vivid memory of him that occurred two weeks ago that stuck in my mind, and was the first thought of him when I heard of his death.

I saw him two weeks ago, on Mother's Day, with his mother in the Williamsburg Nursing Home, visiting with his grandmother. That single act reflected, to me, his personality, and will be the image that I will always carry with me in my career as a journalist.

Jim's smile always made you feel special and that is one of the things I miss the most about him. (That and his great hugs.)

Mother's Day is no longer merry for me, but I reflect on past Mothers' Days and their merriment, and I cherish those memories and they help to carry me through the day. It is so crushing to accept that I am now a **Childless** Mother, but I continue to be a "parent" to our students here at Cumberland, and feel so blessed that I am permitted to be involved in their lives. One of our greatest blessings is to be around our "greats." They make life fun and full and help me to relive the wonderful days we had with Jim at their ages.



May 20th is the 7th anniversary of Young Jim's death. Much has happened since that date.

(Our lives have totally changed, as have our goals and purpose. Jim and I feel that Young Jim will be remembered for many years to come ... especially since the football stadium on campus has been named in his memory, and we will graduate two Jim Taylor, II Memorial Scholarship recipients, May 16th. The first recipient to receive the scholarship is Jim's cousin, Lee, and he is one of the two. At their high school's Honor's Night program, they are given a medallion that they wear at their high school graduation and they will then wear them at their college graduation. It will be a day of mixed emotions. There are currently 7 others who are

receiving scholarships; two to be added May 14th at the Williamsburg High School's Honor's Night Program .. the same night that Young Jim was killed. How ironic that the same night that changed our lives in such a devastating way, now changes lives in such a positive way. My husband has often said that Jim may be changing more lives and have a bigger impact in his death that he may had in life. We will never know, but it is comforting to know that his life continues to change others.

May 24th is our 30th wedding anniversary and it will be an extra special anniversary because my sister, Elaine, is getting married on that day. On May 24th, 30 years ago, Jim and I had such high expectations in our marriage and our future; looking forward to the blessings of our new relationship and having children. Less than 5 years later, we were blessed with Young Jim, our only child ... and he made our lives and marriage complete.

Even though May may not be the "merriest" of months, it is a "marry" month and we plan to celebrate our marriage and look forward to sharing our anniversary with my sister. Young Jim was born on her birthday and her eldest son was born on my birthday, so we share many special dates. Many of you know Elaine and how special she is ..

May you find days to be "merry" this month.



Grief Grafts

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 Smith reviewed the following two books written by Linda Maurer.

I found both to be very well written.

Linda's first book, **I Don't Know How To Help Them**, written in June of 1992, is a poignant account of the loss of Linda and Larry's only child, Molly.

Her book really is a workbook for those of us who have lost a child and for our friends and relatives who travel this path with us. I truly wish I had read this book back in the summer of 1992 after the deaths of our sons, Drew and Jeremiah.

Linda's second book, **Standing Beside You**, really goes a step beyond her first book in dealing with the loss of a child. Her story is so well written. Her suggestions and observations truly mirror what each of us so desperately need, to know. I highly recommend her books to anyone who has suffered a loss or to any family member of someone who has had a loss.

Linda's books should give each of us hope that we can return to living life as Linda so aptly phrases her life at the end of her second book.

If you are interested in either of these books you may contact her:

Linda K. Maurer
7386 Buckingham Court
Boulder, Colorado 80301
phone: 303-530-4533

I hope you are continuing to visit Rosemary's web page, www.childrenofdome.com. Each time I visit the page, there are new things added. Since this month is the 7th anniversary of Young Jim's death, I hope you will visit the pages about him. Keep hitting the menu, **Children of the Dome** until you come to his chapter.

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



Our 9 year-old niece, Eloise, shared the following creative writing assignment she had written in her portfolio about Young Jim:

I was just a baby the last time I saw my cousin Jim.

My brother still cries when he sees the picture of Jim and him playing in the leaves in autumn, because he remembers Jim as very special, and he loved to be with us, he loved us very much!

I can still vaguely remember Jim's face. I don't remember if he was carrying me or if I was just with him.

My mom also once said, "Jim used to cradle you like he was holding a million dollars!" That's why I chose to write about Jim, he is so special to me, to us.

The day he died, he was going to my cousin Wayne's house, he slid off the edge of the road. He was falling, falling, falling! As he was falling, a branch came through the window and hit him in the side of his head and he went out like a light! My mom said, "It was a good death because he didn't feel anything, he didn't know what was happening"

He was a good boy, he loved us very much! He is in heaven and I miss him, very, very much. We all do.

The End

Lois Taylor who is Jim's "Aunt Lolo" wrote the following poem:

Your Young Jim

*Your Young Jim was a very fine lad,
He loved his Mom and he loved his
Dad;*

*There is no doubt he was the "goodest"
boy.*

*To all he knew he brought much joy;
He could mimic his Mom and do it
well,*

*At least ten good things about his Dad
he could tell;*

*We had eighteen years-not nearly
enough,*

*The six he's been gone have been oh so
tough;*

But for all you've done since his death.

*I know he'd be proud
To say "that's my Mom and Dad" to his
angel crowd.*

Lois Taylor

Jim's symbol is a Pegasus.

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

From the heart.....February 26 was celebrated as a time of remembrance of my son, David's life, and the joy he brought me through the years. I still miss him so! As I think about the importance of this month when David would have been 28 years old, my mind goes to the day he was born and I was 28 years old. There always seem to be connecting threads of coincidental dates and ages in our grief journey.

As I enter the third year of grief, I sense that there is nothing special about it. I can't say it is the first year anymore and the trauma it brought. I can't say it is the second year, when the awful hopelessness set in and I had to begin to face reality. This year "life is just life," and I hunger for normal to be just that, but still continue to experience the emptiness of my existence. I want to be able to offer my family a smile and laughter, but many times I go and hide so they won't see that there is still nothing visibly changed about me. The tears are still beneath the surface waiting to spring forth at any emotional moment. They know--they see it in my eyes and they wish it were different for all of us. I long for springtime, to feel the release of "winter and a time when there is no death anniversary or birthday to face and I look forward to the reprieve until next year rolls around.

It was in memory of David's life that I began the ministry of Alive Again, (All Live in Victory Eternally), a Christian newsletter that provides resources to bereaved families. With no anticipation of its future, only until I didn't feel it served a purpose for me to do it any more. Would anyone be interested in what I was trying to accomplish or even care? But care they do! I have received so many letters thanking me, and I want to thank Dinah Taylor for her encouragement to me.

In my search for meaning in my own life and my desire to reach out to others 'with information and support, God has brought special meaning to me through each issue,

with special themes that come to me simply out of my need to help and comfort others.

If you would like a copy of *Alive Again*, please send a written request to Claudine Nickens, *Alive Again*, 410 Wynbrook Dr., Auburn, GA 30011.

My son, David, died, a victim of an armed robbery. He was selling 4 oz. of marijuana to someone he knew. He was shot during a drug buy, while sitting inside his truck at close range, one bullet into his heart. He got out of his truck and ran 200 yards and fell dead. He lived 60 seconds.

In all the newsletters I have written the last year I have never told my complete story in one article. I talk around it in some form in each issue. I guess it is a pain that I have not yet come to terms with completely because so much of it is difficult for me to accept in that my son died while committing a crime. He was a Christian and I know he lives with Jesus today and it is wonderful to know that when I die I will be reunited with him in our eternal home in heaven. I am thinking of taking 6 months off next year from all the activities in my current schedule, to begin a book of my survival of the trials and tragedies in my life.

Last week I gave my Christian testimony to a group of 20 women here on campus at the first Christian Women's Luncheon ever at Georgia Tech. The response to our beginning this group three months ago is one of surprise. The consensus from the entire group is the same - it is wonderful to have a Christian support group on campus where we can share our needs with one another and support each other. For some time God has been leading me to begin this group. Last year we began a Christian Faculty/Staff Forum on campus, sponsored by the Campus Crusade Staff, and from working with this group, God has given me a new boldness to speak out for Him. I have to say it has been scary in an engineering environment to take on a more active role outside of comfort zone. In presenting my testimony and saying things I had never said out loud before, other ladies came up and thanked me for my obedience to God and said different parts had touched something within

them as well. Praise be to God for his mercy and goodness to us!

I have had to change the distribution of *Alive Again* from quarterly to bi-annually. It was rushing me too much in between issues as I am enlarging my distribution to include more service providers. This way I'll make it longer but less frequent. Each quarter I try to write letters to an additional list. I am now starting on the law enforcement agencies throughout the metro area. It seems there is never enough time to do all the things I have ideas about, but at the same time I get so burned out from being busy with "grief" issues that I long for that time when this was not my life.

Claudine also shared about her church:

Thank you for your newsletter. The comments from families regarding clergy were so good. I thought I was the only one who had some of the feelings expressed. I found myself getting very angry as I read and remembered so many similarities and I realized that I have apologized for Christians, especially ministers, without making them responsible for their part in the grief process. But I take partial blame myself in not trying to do my part in letting them know how I feel.

For the last year I am in a church of 300 people where the minister says to me, feel free to start your own ministry here and we will support you. We have no history with anyone there. Even though I have shared my newsletter and the story of the loss of my son David with a few people, no one, including the pastor, ever mentions him to me and they have that look like, please don't let her start talking about her son's death again. It has been time for me to wait on God and I have grown past crying all the way through the service to a time of feeling "oppressed" being there; it's almost like I feel the need to escape. I feel no personal support for where I am. It is a church of mostly young families. There have only been 2 families in the last year who have suffered loss of family. One is a young mother who lost a twin in childbirth and her husband won't let her even talk about it. Another is a young man who lost his mother and he doesn't encourage conversation.

On the other hand, there is a church 5 minutes away that I have been drawn to that has over 3,000 in SS and I have been drawn to that church like a magnet through a grief workshop I attend and now a women's bereavement support which meets weekly. They also have a program where they go immediately to the home of someone who has suffered a loss to make a first response visit and they want bereaved families to minister one on one with new losses. They also let me put my newsletters in the library and have asked me to facilitate video classes in the fall on families in crises.

The answer sounds simply. Go to the church where there is a place for ministry. My heart is certainly leading me here. The kicker is my husband likes to go to a small church and hide where he is not called to do anything or even have to talk to anyone so he is perfectly comfortable in the small church. A dilemma!! Currently, I attend the larger church and my husband attends the smaller church and we sometimes attend other neighboring churches on Sunday evenings. I am praying for God to reveal his will for my life as I continue to serve Him.



David's symbol is the cartoon character "TAZ".

Terry and Kelly Alexander's son, Cole (10-11-92), died as a result of SIDS, 2-9-93. Kelly wrote:

Wake up, little boy - it's time for breakfast! (your big silly grin will live in my heart forever)

It's cold today! (your eyes, so serious, peeking out of your snowsuit at me ~ DID YOU KNOW?)

Mommy is dropping you off early today so she can stop at the store before work to pick it out. Your very first Valentines cards to mail, (I would give anything for that extra ten minutes I could have spent with you that day).

Kisses and Hugs, see you at 5.

At work, writing checks, balancing accounts, just a regular day (the receptionist says I keep getting strange phone calls. What's going on, I wonder?)

A call for me ..

(My brother: **STAY THERE! I AM COMING FOR YOU! WE HAVE TO GO TO THE HOSPITAL!**)

Dad? I ask, "No ", he says, "it's Cole")

Call the sitter, say the girls at work. I call and there is no answer. I wait outside for my brother.

"Are you OK?" asks a passer-by. I do not answer, (I see the car turn the corner, my brother, my mom. Mom climbs over the seat to be with me.

Now I cannot deny it - this may be very bad.)

I run in the ER - where is my baby?

A man approaches me, a minister. I back away from him, "They are working with Cole - I am just here to be with you. They always call me when there is a code. "

(A CODE? I will never again hear that word without remembering this exact moment.)

Lets all go to a private room over here, the minister says.

(I know what that room is for and I remember every step I took towards it.) The Doctor comes in, he is very upset. His mouth is moving, but I don't understand his words. (My brother beats on the wall, my dad is crying, mom holds me.) This feels like a movie that I don't want to watch.

My husband arrives and I have to tell him our sweet baby boy is gone. (Crying and loud talk outside the room - others have been told.)

"Do you want to see your baby", they ask. (We hold him, we study his face, and we say goodbye)

We go home to a house that just hours ago was full of laughter and love and hope. (This house was now cold and empty, full of pain and disbelief) There is business to take care of funeral home, cemetery, clothing, phone calls. (Look at all the cars driving around - don't they know what has happened?) Doesn't everyone realize that the world changed today?

It is now five years later. You would be such a big boy now, fishing with your daddy, starting school this year. (Do you know how much we loved you? Do you watch over your little brother? Do you know how much you changed our lives?)

Will you be there to meet us on the day we leave this life?

I read something on this mailing list this morning that really got to me. It was from a new bereaved parent. She said her baby's doctor had given her the best advice so far about grief

It was: "Look back, but try not to stare."

That one little sentence has so much meaning in it to me. We all look back on our children and when we have some grief work to do, well, that is the staring part. When the loss is new you can't help but stare. As time goes on you can look back and not have to stare so much. When I wrote the poem about Cole, on the day before the 5 year mark, I was really staring. (We all know how the day BEFORE the "DAY" can be hardest) On "the day" I spent it just looking back. Am I making any sense? Anyway, I just wanted to share that with you.

Cole's symbol is a cherub.



Woody and Donna Herndon's son, Roger (6-25-70), was killed in a plane crash, 8-2-91. Donna shared this last Mother's Day:

Being a mother transcends time, place, and plane of existence. Once a mother, always a mother. Motherhood is a state of mind, a manifestation of love, a never ending way of caring.

Your motherhood goes beyond this world perhaps those who have achieved this status should be called "Mother Superiors!"

Roger's symbol is a



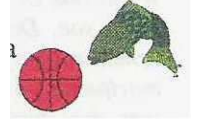
Bob and Cindy Brooks' son, Keith (7-20-81), was killed in an auto accident 6-22-96. Cindy describes their loss:

The loss of our son is still very hard for us. Hearing a song, seeing someone that has a haircut like he had, or having someone say how sorry they are about our loss can sometimes trigger tears so quickly, but other times it can be such a comfort. When I look at his smiling face in a picture, it can make me feel so good.

My grief is getting closer to the middle I want to celebrate Mother's Day because I will always be his mother and I have a 21-year-old son (Michael) who is

A Senior at Cumberland College. I am so proud of him (Proud to be a mother.)

Keith's symbols are a



Joe and JoAnn Keating's daughter, Sunny Chapman (6-20-77), was killed in an auto accident, 7-23-94. JoAnn shared her thoughts:

Our God is an awesome God! This past Mother's Day was my first time to attend church on "Mother's Day" since the death of Sunny, July 23, 1994. Although my husband and I attend on a regular basis, I thought I just COULD NOT go Mother's Day. However, I sing in a small group and we were scheduled to sing on that weekend. On my way. I started to turn around and head home many times, talking with God and telling Him that surely everyone would understand. That weekend also happened to be Baby Dedication, and we had 144 babies dedicated!

After our group had rehearsed and while we were waiting to sing, several of us were in the choir room admiring the babies. One certain baby caught my eye. I couldn't see her very well, she was in a baby carrier and all I could see were her feet kicking in the air. I made the comment to one of my friends that she reminded me of Sunny. I couldn't take my eyes off her. We all continued making comments about all the different babies and finally I couldn't take it any longer. I HAD to see that baby with the feet in the air. I excused myself and went down several rows to the parents and told the father I just had to see her, and she was so beautiful. He looked up at me and asked if I had spoken at the Christmas program two years ago and I told him, "yes". He then told me that he and his wife had named their little girl Sunne after my daughter. His wife said that after they heard me speak that night, while on the way home, they decided that if they ever had a daughter they would name her Sunni. God brought me from the valley to the top of the mountain, just when I needed him most!



Sunny Chapman's symbols
are an angel and sunshine.

Tom and Jayne Fisher's daughter, Katie (10-31-77), died on December 2, 1995, from Burkitt's lymphoma. One of Kattie's friends wrote this in her journal at school:

This is a term paper that one of Katie's friends had sent to me last week. I have not seen her since the funeral. She had met Katie at a summer volleyball camp at a H.S. in Columbus, Ohio and they kept in contact with each other. I hope you enjoy it as much as I have.

Katie's lamb, which is now a 250 lb. breeder ewe is going to be in a live Easter show the 4th and 5th of April, along with my donkey. We are very excited about this and have been practicing like crazy to get them ready.

Dana DeRing
1/98
Final Draft

It was the summer of 1994. I was attending a volleyball camp run by my high school coach in order to prepare for the Ohio Games in Cleveland. Girls from all kinds of schools came to this camp hoping to make the team that would get to make the trip. I met my friend Katie Fisher there, never thinking that someone I would know for such a short period of time would have such an incredible impact on my life. Coach Rembert introduced me to Katie on the first day of camp, knowing I would make sure that everyone there knew her within the hour. We hit it off right away. For starters, we had so much in common it was kind of bizarre. We played the same three sports, we had the same GPA, and even our cats had the same name. As far as volleyball goes, the only real difference was that she was a hitter and I was a setter. Of course, that was the ideal because that meant that we were going to have to play into each other and work together constantly.. I don't know how much you know about the sport, but basically it was my job to get her the ball so she could hit it across the net at the other team. And team. And boy could she spike that ball. She was such a force on the court. Katie would go up to hit and I could actually see the fear in the other

teams' eyes. She was virtually unstoppable, and I was ecstatic to be chosen as her setter.

If anyone were to ask me what our record at the Ohio Games was, I would never be able to tell them. What I remember about that trip was not so much the games, but the good times Katie and I had laughing and talking to each other, introducing each other to our parents who's similarities were also uncanny, and just generally bonding.

In just a few weeks, Katie became one of my best friends. The thing I respected most about Katie would definitely have to be her attitude. She was extremely talented, but she never would have told anyone that. Katie was one of the finest athletes I have ever seen, and one of the most humble people I have ever met. When others were around her, there was not a sense of intimidation one might expect, but instead a sense of belonging. The most non-athletic girl in the world would have felt comfortable around Katie, and she would have welcomed her with open arms. Katie was also very happy, and she spread her happiness to others. For example, if I got down during a game, Katie was the one encouraging me and getting me back into it. She taught all of the girls on the team not to "sweat the small stuff." If we lost the ball, we would get it back, and if the opponent scored a point, we would score two. In the short time I played with her, Katie made me a better player and more importantly, she made me a better person. If I had known for a second what was going to evolve soon after this time we had together, I would have taken pictures of her and written down everything she said so that I would always be able to look back on exactly what happened between us.

After the Ohio Games, we kept in contact, mostly through Coach Rembert because she lived out in the country and I lived right in the city. We were both busy, so we did not get to see each other, but we both understood the other's commitments. During basketball season, Katie had a couple occurrences after games where she would pass out and no one knew why. After numerous tests, a cyst was found on one of her ovaries. After more tests another one, the size of a grapefruit, was found on her other ovary, and they were both declared malignant. My seventeen year old teammate and

friend had ovarian cancer. The doctors were able to remove the smaller cyst, but they also had to remove her ovary. Because the other cyst was so large, however, they would have had to do a complete hysterectomy. They agreed that Katie would receive chemotherapy instead of a hysterectomy, so that she would still be able to have children someday. She came to the city to receive her treatments, so I was always at the hospital to visit her. She lost her hair and a lot of weight. She was definitely not the same girl I had played with only months before. However, as upsetting as it was to see her like that, we knew she would be okay and it was a nice chance for us to talk.

The chemotherapy seemed to be working, but the doctors soon found cysts throughout her torso. The ovarian cancer had developed into lymphoma. There was a combination of surgeries and treatments, and by summertime, the conclusion was that she was in remission, she would get to play sports her last year in high school, and she would even be able to come to volleyball camp. We were finally going to get to play ball together again. I was thrilled.

Things did not go quite as planned. Katie came to camp again that summer, but could not participate as much as everyone had hoped, and it was very hard on her. It hurt me to see her sitting on the sidelines. I could not figure out how such a force had become so weak. We ended up not having enough girls to take an older team to Cleveland, but Coach Rembert asked me to coach the younger of the two teams he did put together. Katie planned on coming along, but her poor health prevented that.

My high school team held a two week camp before school started to prepare for the upcoming season and to give the freshmen a chance to get acquainted with the upperclassmen. During this camp, Coach Rembert sat everyone down to tell us that Katie's condition had worsened.

There were three girls, including myself, who had played with Katie, and we were immediately taken back by the way he handled it. Our coach was the most level-headed person I have ever met in my entire life. He never showed any emotion, good or bad, but when he tried to tell us that it did not look good, he broke down and cried. I knew right then that the situation was serious. He said that from that point forward, we were going to dedicate our season to Katie because of the inspiration she could be even to those who did not know her well.

Katie had again been told she was in remission and that there was a chance she would be able to start playing again at some point during her senior year. Again, we were all led to disappointment. After repeatedly being told she was going to be all right to play, the reality was harsh. Katie would have to give up what meant the most to her. She awakened one morning and her entire left side was paralyzed. Her cancer had spread to her brain, and on top of that she had pneumonia. She was hospitalized so that the doctors could get her situation under control. I went to the hospital to see her as often as I could after school and on the weekends. I would sit for hours and talk to her about anything I could think of other than her condition. She seemed to be doing pretty well, under the circumstances, and instead of me having to encourage her, she was my encouragement. I spent her eighteenth birthday with her on October 31, 1995, in her hospital room. I would have been hysterical if I were in her position, but she seemed perpetually happy. I saw her break down one time during her entire illness. She begged her mother to get her out of the hospital and cried about how much she hated it there. Who could have blamed her?

Soon after her birthday, she was moved to another room because she needed oxygen and no roommate. The few times I visited her there, she told me of her plans to go to Disney World and asked me what I wanted her to bring back for me. She was also plugging away at her Christmas list. She asked me what was going to ask for. I told her that the only thing I could hope for was her recovery and she promised that my Christmas wish would come true.

In November, Katie crashed and was taken to the Intensive Care Unit where they put her all a respirator. Her cancer had wrapped itself around her spine, and was blocking the fluid from being released from around her brain so they had to catheterize it. I kept going to see her even when we could not have the conversations that I used to enjoy so much. I would sit and hold her hand, and talk to her, hoping that somewhere in there was the Katie I used to know and chat she was hearing my prayers. During this time I got to meet the rest of her family. I knew everyone was expecting the worst when all of her aunts, uncles, and cousins were camping out at the hospital.

December 2 was a Saturday. I had just come from seeing the Nutcracker with my family, and I was on my way out the door to go to the hospital when my mother stopped me and told me I needed to hear a message on the answering machine. It was a friend of Katie's family telling me that she had died only hours before. They had taken her off the life support and she lived for a couple of hours all her own before she took her lost sweet breath of life.

I hated myself for not being there on her last day. I thought that maybe if I had just gone instead of going out with my family that one time that maybe she would have hung on. I blamed myself for a lot of things that I knew in my heart I had no control over. My entire life became a blur.

The days of the calling hours and the funeral came upon me quickly. The two girls I was friends with, who had also played with Katie, came with me and my mother to both the calling hours and the funeral. I cannot begin to explain the feelings I had rushing through me when I stood beside the casket that was holding someone who could have just as easily been me. Looking at Katie's tired body dressed in her high school letter jacket hurt me more than I could have imagined. I knew that it was going to be difficult to be there, but I think that some part of me really thought it was a terrible joke. I felt every emotion a person could feel all at once. I was, angry, hurt, confused, frustrated, scared, and upset. On the other hand,, I felt nothing except my heart throbbing and the tears running down my face. I could not find

any comfort in anything or anyone. All I could think about was how unfair it was. I wondered how God could let this happen to someone as wonderful as Katie. Why couldn't He understand that she had goals that she had not achieved, people who hadn't yet had the chance to meet her, and hundreds of people who already knew her and would miss her tremendously?

I went to the head minister of my church with these questions. He tried to help me the best he could, yet even he could not explain all of God's actions. He told me about losing his infant son. It helped a little to know that he could sympathize with my confusion, but it was also difficult to understand and hard to accept that even a man of God could not explain why He did what He did.

The funeral was on a day I had school, but I also had to attend half a day to be able to participate in my team's basketball practice that night. At that point, playing was my only release. When I walked into the funeral home, it was so crowded that we were not sure if we would even be able to find a seat. There was soft country playing in the background a combination of Katie's, favorites and appropriate songs for The occasion. The ages of people there ranged from young children to elderly adults. It was a wonderful representation of the number of lives Katie had touched in her short eighteen years. I sat down with my mother and friends at my side. No sooner had we found our seats, but the head minister and the minister of music from my church walked in and sat right behind me. They never knew Katie, but they understood how much I needed their support that day.

The service was beautiful. A few people spoke, but most of us sat in awe. I still could not accept that this was really happening. I touched Katie's hand all the way out of the funeral home, and was almost surprised she did not squeeze me back.

The procession to the cemetery was one unlike any other I have ever seen. The line of cars seemed endless, and many of the cars

coming the other direction on the road had pulled over in recognition of our gloomy parade. A few short words were said at her grave, and then it was over. I placed a rose on her casket and said goodbye to my friend and to the piece of myself that she would take with her.

Throughout everything, Katie's family had stayed very strong. She had her parents and a younger sister, along with grandparents and other assorted relatives. As everyone turned to leave, a scream broke the silence. It was Jayne, Katie's mother, calling her name in utter agony. I know how I felt, but I cannot begin to imagine what she must have felt like right then. People rushed to comfort her, but I stood back. No one understood that she could not be comforted. I wanted to tell them that she would never be okay again; nothing in her life would ever be the same again.

For a long time after the funeral, I felt like I was outside my body, watching everything around me. I started appreciating what had once seemed insignificant. I never again took stepping onto the court for granted. I learned how important my family is to me. I looked at the sun and felt the wind completely differently than I had before. Katie had felt the sun's warmth for the last time long before she should have, and I felt like I needed to feel it for both of us.

As I look back on this experience in my life, I think of how tragic it really was, and how sometimes, even as I write this, it does not seem real. I still do not think it was fair, and I will never understand what happened to her, but I try to look at what I gained from it. They say that everything happened for a reason, and at first that reason is often hard to find. Two years after the funeral, I can look back and see all the new people I met, who exchanged memories of Katie with me. I can see how I learned that many times when I think something is really bad, I should be counting my blessings and remembering that I can still talk, breath, enjoy life, and play ball. I still wonder about God, but sometimes I think that He knew I took what I had for granted, and He was trying to show me how lucky I actually was.

People say that you should not base your life on how long you live, but on how much you accomplish. Katie ac-

complished more in eighteen years than most people will in eighty. She touched more lives than I could ever hope to. She kept her emotional strength even when her physical strength was spent. Her good attitude never wavered. She always knew she would be okay and that someday she would be playing college ball. Her dazzling smile was never replaced with a frown, and like I said before, when we should have been encouraging Katie, it was definitely the other way around, and it still is. Katie's spirit has kept me from quitting when I though situations were hopeless, given me a good attitude even when I was furious, and makes me acknowledge the "little" things every day of my life. I still talk to Katie occasionally, when I cannot imagine everything being okay, and I ask her to help me through it. Time and time again she comes through for me. Not only was she my teammate and friend, now she is my guardian angel, keeping watch over me and making sure that when I feel like quitting, I take a deep breath and give it everything I've got, if I could tell her just one more thing, I would not say much; only, "Thank you, Katie, for everything you were and are to me. I'll see you when I get there."

Katie's symbols are a cat and a softball glove.

Roxanna Aldridge (1977-2014), twin daughter of Katie Cornish, died from a Bilateral Pulmonary Emboli, 11-23-94. Katie shared her feelings about May:

For most of us I think May is a hard month (next to the Christmas Holidays). My other twin, Crystal, will Graduate May 10th. I am so proud, but a lot sad too. I try to keep those thoughts away but I still let them get to me. I can't believe she's finally made an RN. I truly am grateful but I am selfish too, I really want them "both" to graduate. But, my son graduates from kindergarten next, so I should feel very blessed. I keep telling myself that and 99% of the time I feel that way. After reading Four comments about "Mother's Day" for the mothers that have lost all their children or an only child, I truly do feel blessed and I thank you for making some of us feel we still have our other children and to look for brighter days.



Roxanna's symbol is a deer.

Linda (5-15-74), the daughter of Sue Benson, was killed, 8-28-96.

I have written you before of my Linda, but I am sending you this poem, which she wrote sometime before her death; I do not know when. Hers was a sudden violent death, so she was not writing from her deathbed or with any special foreknowledge, although she at one time told me she'd probably die before she was 30, and I remember telling her, I should certainly hope not. This is not a sentimental poem; it's a poem of a young intelligent artist. She was not frills and bows; she was hole in the jeans, flannel shirt and black T-shirts. She was beautiful, just admitted to Ohio State University, but never got the chance to attend.

Here is her own eulogy:

Don't care about you anymore.

Don't want to hear your moaning anymore.

Get over it, over yourself over him, over all of them, over me.

When you are old you won't remember.

Nothing good, or powerful.

Sorrow, loneliness and greed.

Jealousy, hatred, and regret is all you'll feel.

No one around that hasn't been bored away by your self pity.

If you keep on focusing on the wrong damn things.

Open up, realize, there is more out there for even your eyes.

Everyone hurts, feels pain of every kind.

Pain and joy, hand in hand.

Let yourself be freed to feel that you are worthy too.

Of all the pleasures and treasures of the world.

Also all the heartache and loneliness, without feeling unfairly targeted.

Everything is random, nothing fair.

Make something good happen.

written by: Linda Louise Benson

And, NO, Linda did not commit suicide if that's what you're thinking. She did die suddenly, however. Her attitude was possibly more realistic and more in tune with what Christianity teaches than most.

Life's not "fair" but we must deal with it and "make" something good happen and not feel sorry for ourselves.

Linda's symbols are a palette and a VW Bug.



Earl and Carol Sias' son, Greg (9-29-77), was killed in an auto accident, 11-5-97. Carol shares her process of grieving:

I am traveling at a snail's pace down this treacherous road. I would very much like to hear from other parents. Please feel free to publish my E-mail address, which is whisper.time@juno.com. The computer has become my journal more than the written one I have been attempting to maintain.

It is so important to me to share with other parents on this path. I have a letter that I wrote to Rosemary Smith that I would like to share with the newsletter. I also have one that I wrote to Barbara Coldiron the other day which takes the reader into my head, and I suspect a good many of theirs as well. Our son Greg was one of a set of identical twins. He was born on 9/29/77 and had just been 20 a month. On November 5th, 1997, our lives as we knew them were changed forever. He was a passenger in his girlfriend's car. They were on their way to a mall in Nashville. It was a bright sunny afternoon, just before 2 PM. For some unknown reason, the car simply left the interstate and crashed into three trees. Our son was killed instantly. A gentleman who was driving behind them immediately stopped and attempted to assist them. He was able to get Stephanie out of the car, which he said had a fire in the engine. He held our son, stroked his head, sobbed and prayed for him. I will always be thankful, because he did what I, as his mother, would have done had I been there. They brought our son to the hospital where I am employed as all R.N. My worst nightmare came true that afternoon.. I was paged and asked to go to an area that I generally do not go to. I do home care coordination for the hospital. so I work throughout the building. About halfway down the last corridor I began to feel lightheaded

and got a horrible feeling in the pit of my stomach. A nursing supervisor led me into the office. I scanned the room and saw (I do not work under the nursing department. thus I do not normally go to the nursing offices) the face of the assistant VP of patient care with a look that I will never erase from my memory. Next I saw another face, then the Hospice Chaplain, and lastly the paramedic. Someone sat me down in a chair as I asked him "Who was it?", He replied "Greg." I then simply stated, "He's dead, isn't he?" The paramedic cast down his eyes and nodded, "Yes." He then, I am certain, told me about the accident, as I exploded with sobs and questions. My husband was over 30 miles away in Nashville at rush hour. Greg's identical twin brother and their roommate and two other friends were at the local university nearby. Our other son was at home and my step-daughter in Texas. They all arrived one at a time. The last to arrive was my husband, Earl. The paramedics stayed with us until shortly before we left and some of the people from the hospital and Hospice took all of us home. A good many people in the hospital knew about Greg's death before I did. My children often would stop by during the day to say, "Hi," so a lot of the staff knew them. I am fortunate to work in an environment that is very family oriented. One of the social workers positively identified Greg. The Hospice Chaplain went to pick up our youngest son. The nursing supervisor washed Greg and prepared Greg for us to see him in the morgue. You know this story from here. You have been there. Nothing in our lives will ever be the same again.

We are still new in this. It is so difficult to be organized now. I just discovered that we missed the Compassionate Friends meeting that was last week. I was basing the third Sunday on Saturday. The first of the month was all a Sunday. We look forward to those meetings and they are only once a month. It is somewhat depressing because it reinforces the reality that it will take years to move much beyond, where we are now in the journey. We have another couple that we have become very close to. Their 16-year old son was killed also in an auto accident. One of them is also a nurse and she

has not grieved at all. She is typical of us nurses in that she is supporting and caring for the others who have been devastated by her son's death. Have you noticed that so many of these children are boys?

Just a bit of information about us as a family. Both my husband and I are 50. I am a Registered Nurse and my husband is an Episcopal priest. Our third son is 17 and my husband has a newly married daughter who is 27. We have been married for 22 years. We moved here from Palm Beach City, Fl. at the request of the church to start a new mission. Earl, Christopher (the youngest child) and I really love TN. Tim and Greg, although they have a strong alliance of friends here, miss the beach and the tropical lifestyle, as well as their friends there that they have had since young children. We had a funeral here, but also went back home to Florida the next week and had a service there, as well.

You had requested that we write about our feelings regarding the clergy and what our feelings are about the support that we have or have not received. That is a difficult question for me to answer as a clergy wife. I can say that I do not feel that I have been supported by the clergy in our church. The hospital chaplain and the Hospice chaplain have both been helpful. I am able to say that again, unless they have lost a child, a clergyman cannot conceive what it is like any more than a lay person can. Therefore, they tend to equate the loss of a child in the same class as any other loved one. And yes, some of the things they say even to a fellow clergyman and his wife and family lack true understanding of the immensity of the loss. The usual offerings of comfort can pierce our hearts rather than to lift them. They do not always understand that even though we may call out to God throughout each and every day, many of us are experiencing a very difficult and awkward relationship with God at this time. We understand that God must know how we feel because He too, lost His son. We do not understand why this happened to us. Why

our beautiful, kind children were snatched from our loving arms.

Clergymen are mere mortal men who have been called to act as God's messengers and to aid in leading us to Heaven. That does not innately give them the knowledge or the words of comfort that we need. Instead, we may have to be the ones, as we eventually experience some degree of peace, to educate them so that in the future they can avoid the phrases that sting our hearts instead of giving us solace. As for my husband, he has now experienced the greatest tragedy a parent could, and I feel that he will never fall into the pious pitfalls of other clergy as they counsel bereaved parents.

I think that the question that most of us parents ask over and over is "why?" I have thought and thought about the answers given by clergy, our Biblical teachings, our broken hearts, and of inappropriate statements made by well wishers. In essence, in approaching the subject with my mind rather than with my heart, I must admit that God is not in the business of hurting and killing, but in loving and protecting. He would not take our children because it is his will ... He would not take them because He needed another angel. He is the creator of all that is around us. He can create anything he wants. He doesn't need to take back that which He has given us. He is with us all of the time. He is everywhere. He can be as close to us as He wants and He can have us close to Him right here on Earth. He has given us, as human beings on this earth, certain freedoms. One of them is the freedom of choice. All of our teachings and life experiences show us that there has always been a struggle in this world between good and evil. Because of that bad things happen and children die. He did not make that the normal order of things. He loves us too much to hurt us. When one of our children does die for whatever reason, He is waiting there to pull that child of ours close to Him and to again give them a new eternal life with Him. I continue to have an awkward relationship with God. I don't really blame Him, but as a human being I reach for some kind of understanding and a hope that when I wasn't able to protect my son, and his life here ended suddenly and tragically, he wasn't alone.

In my heart I hold a hope that God was there with him with outstretched arms that enfolded him and carried him to that new life. I would like to think that is why the corners of his mouth were slightly turned up into a soft smile and that those last seconds quickly turned from fear and terror to the joy, love, peace and security that poured forth when Greg saw the face of God.

Dinah, you asked for me to write about my experiences with talking with people about their grief before our son's death. As a nurse, I spent many years in situations where I was the deliverer of the news of a parent's child's death. I struggled to find what I thought were words of comfort for those parents. I cannot tell you now what I must have said.

On a personal note, in a six year period of time, my parents experienced the loss of three sons between the late 80 's and early 90 's. They were 32, 29, and 37 and died from AIDS, completion of suicide (had been very disfigured in an almost fatal auto accident), and sudden cardiac death, respectfully. My 37-year-old brother left behind a wife and three young children. The other two boys were single. Chris, the 32-year-old was a physicist and, was at a time in his life that he was ready to marry and have a family. I remember how devastated they were. I also remember thinking to myself that, statistically I did not think that they would have to go through this again. I had also had a cousin, who at the same age as my son, was killed instantly in an auto accident. He and I were the same age. We were as close as brothers and sisters and I remember that my aunt was never the same again, and now, 30 years later, she still mourns for her son. When the unthinkable happened again and then again, I no longer thought about statistics. Then four years ago, my other cousin, that I was closest to and who lived around the corner from us, died from a brain tumor.

I remember before our son's death, trying to understand the depth of what my parents were feeling and experiencing. I could not. I knew what it was like to almost lose two of our children from illness and anaphylaxis. We had experienced the loss of a child through a miscarriage. I thought perhaps that experience gave me insight. I was very

wrong. I would look at pictures of the children and try to imagine them being dead in order to try to understand what it must be like for my parents. Because so many of the young men in my side of the family had died so young, I was fearful that it would happen to us, too. It did. I know now how it feels to have a piece of me torn away forever and I am fearful that this will happen again to us. Statistics don't matter. In the two newsletters that I have read. I see parents who have lost more than one child. I am four months into my own journey on this path and I still don't know that I will ultimately survive the loss of Greg. I think of my parents now and am amazed that they are still standing and able to function. Ironically, I don't go to them for comfort because they have been torn apart by the death of their grandchild and the fact that they were not able to protect me from the same loss that they experienced. This time it is their grandchild and they, too, are grieving again. They very much understand what we are experiencing and feeling. I am certain that after some more time has passed, I will call on them for advice and comfort. For now, with the exception of those we have met since our son's death who have also lost their children, we stand alone. Those friends who were the closest to us and who have not lost a child feel hurt for us and at a loss and thus have become distant. Those that I know and work with love and are concerned for me to the point that they don't breach the subject for fear of saying the wrong thing. Others try to extend awkward words of comfort, their eyes tear, and then they simply shake their heads for loss of the right words. What I most want to do is talk about the accident, and about my son.

I will gladly send you a picture of Greg. Unfortunately, Greg would not let me take pictures of him this last year. His hair wasn't right, he did not have time, he did not have the right clothes on, etc. A couple of his friends gave me some snaps and I have had copies made. His best friend, Amanda, took some Polaroid

pictures of him shortly before the accident. He had not shaved in a couple of days and he had his hair tipped black at the ends for Halloween. I don't know about where you live, (you are also in a university town) but the young people use a washable hair tint in colors to at times make a fashion statement or for special events. Actually, in the last three years that we have lived here, I have had a problem getting any of them to allow snapshots. I had more pictures of the house and my many Christmas trees and decorations (until this last Christmas our house would be transformed into a holiday wonderland) than I had of the children. Now I am taking as many pictures as I can and they are letting me. One of my many regrets is that I simply did not take pictures anyway.

A short paragraph about Greg and the person that he was. Greg was a care giver, a humanitarian, and a diplomat. He, throughout his short life, brought numerous wounded animals and friends to our house. He literally never met a stranger. He was as at ease with a homeless person as he was talking to a celebrity. He was gregarious and had an enormous number of friends of all ages. He was generous to a fault at times. He was assertive and street smart. He was a supporter for what was right and just. He would stay up all night with troubled or sick friend. He always loaned a helping hand to those in need. He regularly gave away his belongings to friends if he thought they were in need or if he thought they would have special significance. He was a peacemaker. He had a lot of interests. He loved to skateboard and would not let me watch him do his tricks because he was afraid that he would break his neck doing them, that it would break his power of concentration. He loved music and was in the process of organizing a band. He was a championship video game player. He was a friend to many that no one else would befriend because they were new or didn't fit the mold. I was flooded with calls from tearful parents and friends telling me how much Greg had impacted their lives and the lives of their children. We had only lived in TN for a little less than three years, but we

were told by the funeral director that over three hundred young people had attended the funeral here. The phone and the doorbell did not stop ringing for weeks. Right after the accident, several of his closest friends literally camped out at our house on couches and the floor in sleeping bags.

Carol expressed her impressions of the first Mother's day since Greg's death:

This Mother's Day will be the first without my son, Greg. With this new holiday, I will again be venturing into unknown waters. Each holiday that we have faced in these last five months I think of as impossible to survive. We have been through five now and I am still here. It amazes me. I am amazed that I have survived and I am amazed at how very difficult it is to get through the days ahead of the holiday and then through the holiday itself

I believe that Mother's Day is like our children's birthdays. It is an especially important holiday because, as mothers, we relate it to the birth of our children. We celebrate their lives and give thanks that God has given our children to us. On this day we look into the faces of each one and remember that new puffy round small face of a newly emerged newborn with its tiny little body, fingers and toes. Each child makes us a mother. We especially remember our first born for the occasion but each new birth is wonderfully magical and miraculous.

Greg was our first born. He was one of a set of identical twins. Thusly, his younger brother, Tim, followed suit close behind. Greg was always a healer and a helper of mankind. He honored all that he met and he always found some way to honor me in a very special way on Mother's Day. Sometimes it was a drawing, a hand made card, a note, and always a big hug, kiss, and many I love you's. I have kept most of the pictures, notes and cards that the children have made for me through the years. I am so happy that I have. I know now that I will never receive another from Greg.

Since Greg's death I have come across many gifts as I have been in a closet or a drawer or in my jewelry box.

To most, they would not have special significance. To me, they are priceless and displayed or worn with immense pride and indescribable joy. The Star of India could not begin to compare in value to the little ring in the plastic heart box that he had given to me. At this time in my new journey, these treasures hold tears, sadness and a profound sense of loss. I look at them with softness and try to recapture the memories that surround them. It is difficult to do now because the pain is so great. I fear that I will forget those memories before I am able to think of them with a smile.

How will I perceive this Mother's Day? I do not know. I, on one hand, dread its coming. On the other hand, I still have other children to celebrate. I need to try and focus on them. I don't know what they will do for me. I suppose that Mother's Day will be somewhat awkward for them, too, because one of them is absent. They may try to do something in Greg's honor for me. The gift I most want I cannot have. Greg will not appear bright and early that morning to greet me. Not this Mother's Day nor any other. My other wish is for my other children to stay safe and alive. Material gifts do not matter for it is the gifts from the heart that we will always treasure and remember. I want to take the time to think about all of the other mothers who will be celebrating this day without their children, too, and try to embrace them. I want to tell them all that I believe that God did not take our children away from us, but that He was there to hold out his loving arms to receive and hold them for all eternity when they died. Perhaps this thought can be our gift this day....



Greg's symbols are "I RULE", skate board, yin yang, music and a helping hand.



Daniel and Vicki Crowthers' son, Michael (6-14-75), was killed in a motorcycle accident 7-22-91. Vicki shared her experiences with her clergy:

First, I would like to thank you for sending me all the past newsletters.

They are very informative and helpful. I helped for a couple of years with the *Compassionate Friends* newsletter, I'm sure you've heard of them. Well, the real reason I'm writing is to send in how my clergy treated us when we lost Michael, he couldn't of been more helpful. He and his wife came right over and it was his usual day off. They were very loving, concerned people. He prayed with us, was there with us for many hours, was on call for anything we needed. I remember calling him later that night with questions about Michael. He told me that Michael had just changed places of residence and that he was still in our hearts. Because of the location, for the next few days, we met at my parents and the pastor was there a good bit of the time. By the way, I hope you remember sending me all those newsletters and I used some of the material in our newsletters, I should have asked you first, but they were so helpful to me that I just wanted to share your experiences with our group, yes they did help. Jerry Jonas is the person that told you about me. I met her in Kentucky at the Bereaved Parents Conference in August of 1996. Now, a little bit about Michael, he was born June 14, 1975, in Mt. Vernon, Ohio. We thank the Lord that He loaned Michael to us for 16 years, although I wish he was still with us. On July 22, 1991, he was riding his motorcycle on a beautiful sunny afternoon, enjoying the scenery, when he was rounding a corner and watching the dam when he hit a truck head on. I'm finding after 6 1/2 years it is still difficult to talk about. I'm shaking as I am writing about it. He was taken to Children's Hospital, but he didn't make it, Michael was our first born, and he was a child so full of life, he loved to camp, to draw, be with his friends. He was a very caring person. I miss his hugs and telling me that he loves me. I miss him so very much, but what keeps me going is I know he is in heaven with the Lord and I will see him again one day. Michael's symbols would be camping equipment, a Chevy emblem. The Email address is in my husband's name, but my name is Vicki and I would love to receive mail from anyone who would like to send it. E-mail Dan.Crowthers@eer.net

Michael's symbols are camping and a Chevy emblem.



Chaps and LuAnn Burnett's daughter, Anna Beth (12-19-84), was killed in a tragic accident, 5-9-93. LuAnn's acronym describes our feeling of Mother's Day now:

Happy Mother's Day! How bittersweet the words to each of us in this tragic club. May always brings such beauty and sadness together, to soften the blow, to remind us that life springs eternal.

*Mom
Of
Mourning!*

Anna Beth's symbol is a rainbow-colored cat.



The Compassionate Friends Group from Atlanta sent the following plea and I encourage each of you to contact your senators:

We are asking for your support. The Compassionate Friends has worked for many months to make a National Children's Memorial Day a reality. We believe that a national day, designated to honor our children who have died, will demonstrate support and understanding for bereaved families.

US. Senators Harry Reid and Richard Bryan of Nevada have introduced a resolution to have the second Sunday in December designated as National Children's Memorial Day.

Senator Dorgan of North Dakota and Senator Kerrey of Nebraska are co-sponsors.

S. Res. 193: Designating the second Sunday of December of each year as National Children's Memorial Day.

If this resolution passes, National Children's Memorial Day will coincide with our annual Worldwide Candle lighting.

We need at least 50 co-sponsors. Please phone, write, or E-mail your congressmen and ask them to cosponsor S.RES. 193.

<http://www.compassionatefriends.org/sres193.htm> will link you to a draft of the bill and offer quick and easy ways to contact your congressmen.

RESOLUTION

Designating the second Sunday of December of each year as "National Children's Memorial Day".

Whereas, 145, 000 infants, children, teenagers, and young adults die each year in the United States:

Whereas, the death of a child is one of the greatest tragedies suffered by a family: and

Whereas, support and understanding are critical to the healing process of a bereaved family: Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Senate designates the second Sunday of December of each year as "National Children's Memorial Day"; and (2) requests that the President issue a proclamation designating the second Sunday of December of each year "National Children's Memorial Day" and calls on the people of the United States to observe the day with appropriate ceremonies and activities in remembrance of infants, children, teenagers, and adults who have died.

Casey (1-13-84), the son of Frank and Beth Russell, died in a train accident, 6-20-94, with Adam, the son of Eddie and Janet Warnick. Beth shares Casey with us:

Casey was born a few minutes after midnight on Friday 13th. The nurse thought we would be upset by the fact it was Friday the 13th, but Casey's mom was born on a Friday the 13th, so we thought it was a great thing. He was our third child and we were thrilled to have him. It took us five long years to have a child and we were so happy to now have our third healthy and beautiful child. Casey grew up in a good neighborhood where the children played up and down the streets. He was a happy child and most loving. Teachers would tell about his constant hugs and his wonderful smile. One of the things Casey loved to do was go with his dad and brother hunting, and that explains the background of his page.

On Father's Day, 1994, he had his good friend and former neighbor,

Adam, spend the night with him. Adam was 11 and he and Casey both played baseball at our little league park. On Monday, they got up and watched some TV, but it was a beautiful day and they got restless. Casey asked his mother if they could go over to the school and play on the newly renovated playground. The boys went to the playground but somehow decided to explore and ended up on a railroad trestle over a creek. As they looked down over the creek a freight train with 82 cars came around the curve. The boys had no escape route and were trapped. We had a double funeral with a tremendous turnout and quite a tribute to two fine young men that were well-liked in the community. They are laid to rest in adjoining plots and are forever in our hearts.

Their E-mail address is BZRIO@aol.com. Their web page <http://members.aol.com/fcr1O/index.html>

Casey's symbol is a heart with "brave" written in the center.



Donna Carr's son, Clyde ((8-9-82), died from Leukemia, 6-27-93. Donna has a ministry of sending parents crafted symbols of their children. Donna shares her heartbreaking experience with her church:

I'm going to share with you the experience I had with the pastor of my church.

Grant you, I wasn't best in attendance, but I did raise my children in church. I was baptized in the same church I took my children. After Clyde's illness, I went much less. I went one Sunday, after things had gone and was going pretty bad in reference to Clyde, and I stood up and told the church that I need my church family more than ever. Two tidbits that are important to know is that the majority of the members are related and my father is one of the strongest pillars of the church, physically and financially. When the pastor stood to give his sermon, he spoke to me from the pulpit and told me that (in reference to Clyde having Leukemia) sometimes God tries

to tell us things through our children and in different ways. He said, "that maybe I needed to come to church more often." I was very upset with him for blaming my son's illness on my not attending church as often as he felt that I should. Within a 3 or 4 week span, only one member called and talked very briefly. She said she just wanted to know how I was doing. When you had put out the poem, "Please See Me Through My Tears," I was reminded very much of this situation. I have shared that poem with many. She never asked me if I needed anything or if there was something she could do. I hung up feeling no better than before she called. My pastor also worked at UK hospital where Clyde and I spent a large part of his three years and eight months after his diagnosis. He worked right in the children's ward and would just walk right by our room. Some days he would speak, not really being able to avoid it and some days he wouldn't. As Clyde's death was approaching, I couldn't or wouldn't, I don't know, do anything in reference to being a mother of the house. like grocery shopping or cooking, nor was I even working to make money to do so. I did receive SSI for Clyde and child support, but it wasn't nearly enough. I lived in a house with all utilities to pay. So my father asked the church, I really felt bad that it had to be asked, if they could donate my family a food basket. Not because he didn't or wouldn't do it himself, just to urge the church to do what he felt like was their. Almost a week and half maybe two weeks later, the pastor's wife dropped off one box of (stuff). It was mostly dry goods, flour, sugar, pantry staples. No meat, no canned goods. I couldn't put together a meal with what was in the box without having to put something else with it. When I knew in my heart that Clyde only had days left, I called the pastor and asked him if he would come and bless his soul. In my way of thinking, he hadn't joined the church yet or had he been baptized or in other words given his life to Christ on his own, I felt this was my way of doing that, right, wrong or indifferent. He told me he would try to make it. When he and his wife came, Clyde was sleeping. He told me he didn't want to disturb him. I told him that I wanted him to do it anyway because I didn't feel that

there was much time left. This was on a Friday. They quickly prayed and left. They did not stay to give me comforting words or pray with the girls. Clyde died on that following Sunday. I had planned on having Clyde's funeral at the church. He told me that normally the church didn't allow non-members to have their funerals in the church. Having been born and raised to that church, more or less, because this is my family's home town, in spite of us traveling over the years, I've seen otherwise, I told him that Clyde was only seven when he got Leukemia and was at an age to consider joining the church so I asked him to forget it. He interrupted me and said that he didn't say that he wouldn't, he just said it was normally the practice of the church. He then consented.

Before the funeral, I asked him not to conduct the service with many guests speaking because no one really knew Clyde and I couldn't imagine what they may say about him. The pulpit was full of speakers. When my pastor, being the first, got up to speak, he said "I know Ms. Carr requested that I didn't let other pastors speak, but I feel that they need to. Although I was very upset, it did turn out to be good for my soul.

After they put Clyde's body in the ground. I never heard anything more from any church. I have attended, but there has been no comforting. Maybe they don't know how. I want to believe that if God and His son live in your heart and mind, you are automatically given direction on how to be of some comfort in one way or another. I felt that if someone would just come and visit. They didn't really have to talk about Clyde, just talk to me.

Clyde's symbol is a teddy-bear.



Sherri Alise Landsman (10/03/67) the daughter of Norm and Debbie Landsman died from leukemia, 12/02/90. Debbie shares their journey of grief:

Our 23-year old daughter, Sherri, died December 2, 1990, after her 8-1/2 month struggle with leukemia and bone marrow transplant. As bereaved parents, we are always looking for ways to keep 'alive' her memory and her name.

On December 2, 1990, my daughter, Sherri, died – but, we both entered the 'valley of death', She remained, and I was left to make the most difficult journey of my life. I really don't know exactly when it happened that I chose to live and go on, but I do know it took all my strength, mentally and physically, to begin my journey out of that valley.

Her death left me broken. It took my being, it took my trust in life, it took my innocence, it took my white picket fence, it took a part of my husband, it took pieces of my surviving daughter and her family, it took my spirit, it took my naiveté, it took my passion, it took my enthusiasm, it took my belief system, it took some of our friends, it took some family members, it took my concentration, it took my energy, it took my hope, it took my happiness, it took my celebrations, it took my joy, it took my patience, it took my traditions, it took the order from my universe, it took my dreams, it took my sleep, it took my peace, it took my laughter, it took my future, it took a river of tears, it took my faith, it took my God. ..

Some thought it took me too long, too many years to make my journey. Some thought I'd emerge from the 'valley' the same old me. How could I have? It ravaged my whole being - it kept my child! Some gave up too soon. I wished they understood. I wished they knew what I and we were going through. I hope they never do

I did eventually emerge from that valley a 'new' me. A 'me' that now owned a more defined set of emotions and belief system. I was drained, I was tired, yet, I felt somewhat stronger. I was more tolerant, I was less judgmental, I felt I was more cynical. I was more frightened, I was sadder, I became more spontaneous, I was very aware of the , I felt more vulnerable, I became more understanding, I was more quiet, I was productive, I still felt depressed at times, I was less optimistic, I felt 'duped', I was angry. I was more easy-going, I was planning again. I was hoping again, I was more loving and

appreciative of life. I was more emotional, I was more sensitive. I was more sympathetic. I was more creative, I was more reality-based, I began re-defining a new belief system. I was more spiritual. I was now confronting all the changes that had taken place in me and in my life during this journey, and I was extremely aware of how fragile and short life REALLY is.

I believe that it was Sherri's spirit and love of life that pushed me to continue my journey. I pained every moment of every day, of every week of every month, for many years after her death, but I eventually made it out of that 'valley' -- reflecting daily on my daughter's zest for life, accepting my decision to live and go on. and finally reconciling her death,

Yes, my reality was altered for the rest of my life, and a 'new normal' settled in.

While driving in my car one day. I imagined the car in front of me bearing a bumper-sticker with Sherri's name on it. I then envisioned other cars bearing a 'monument' to other loved-ones whom have passed on.

It was with that visualization and many tears that the 'Loved and Remembered' Bumper-Stickers evolved. We then created Return Address Labels and Note Cards with Sherri's picture on them for our own use, and were asked by other families to make these items available for them also.

We created these tributes with love and in our daughter's memory, and continue to keep the costs as low as possible, to 'give back' to our bereaved family community. We hope that these personalized memorials on the following pages bring a level of comfort to you, your family, and your friends, in helping to keep your loved-one's memory and name 'alive'.

Following the order forms for the memorial tributes is "Odyssey of a Bereaved Parent" on the website which contains my thoughts and poems since our daughter's death. I think you will be able to relate to some of my writings as you travel your journey of grief. Please feel free to print this out and make any copies and distribute if you wish.

In sympathy and friendship,

Debbie and Norm Landsman.

You may reach the Landsmans by email saland@earthlink.net or telephone: 949 586-8195 They have created "Loved and Remembered" memorial tributes in memory of a loved-one and 'Odyssey of a Bereaved Parent' which contains Debbie's writings and poems she has written since Sherri's death. Their website is <http://home.earthlink.net/~saland/>, and you can order bumper stickers, return address labels and/or note card, with your child's picture on them.

Debbie wrote this poem:

MOM AND DAD

Don't cry away your life for me, for I am with you - you just can't see.

You may not feel my presence from above

But I'm constantly around, embracing you with love.

When you're awake I'm always there-when bedtime comes, your pillow I share.

I know you want me back with you – but, I'm always there, if only you knew. I heard you talking to me each day, oh, I, too, have so much to say.

My Mom and Dad, you'll always be you're just a thought away from me.

Your love went with me - I'm not alone.

I can feel your heartbeat, which is now my home,

I know I was loved during my life there with you

And all that you gave continues to see me through.

We were so close, both you and I-

Please remember that--not the good-bye.

Hold on to these thoughts, keep them close at heart

For like you've said, we're never far apart.

There's one last thing I have to say-I feel your love and I'm okay.

So please don't cry away your life for me,

For I am with you - one day, you'll see.

Lindy Boley's daughter, Randi (4-15-76), died from complications

of pneumonia, 8-27-93.
shared:

Lindy

Received your card today remembering Randi. I thank you for doing that for it meant a great deal to me. Not many remember Randi's birthday. It brought tears to my eyes that someone else remembered. Thank you. I know how much it means to have your child remembered. I do a card ministry for our church.

I send a card to every parent within our church on the death date of their child to remember their child by name. I use my computer to make a card and personalize it for each child. It is one of the things I do to help others to know that though the child may not be here on earth any longer, that the child did exist and acknowledging that fact helps the parents to know that someone cares.

Lindy shared her thoughts about her preacher:

As for the preacher being supportive, no, not really. He was only at the hospital a few times during the five and a half weeks Randi was there. After she died, I only saw him when I went to the church to tell him how I wanted her funeral done. We held her funeral at our church because that is where size grew up. I did not see him at all after the funeral and he has not been to see me since then. But I don't hold it against him. I know how hard it is to come face to face with someone who has lost a child. Maybe they are afraid it will rub off on them if they come to close. Then, I also know that what do you say to someone who has lost a child if you have not?

I had to go to the pastor and tell him that I wanted to do the card ministry for the parents who had lost children. I told him how important it was for the child to be remembered at least on their death date. He said he had no idea how important it was until I told him and he said that it was a good idea to do the card ministry. The church really does not do anything, I take care of it all. My Sunday School class pays all the expenses for the making and sending of the cards. All I do is make the cards on my computer and keep track of when they need to go out. The monetary part comes from my Sunday School class as far as card stock, stamps, envelopes and color ink for my printer. All in all, it takes about \$50.00 a year (which is not bad).

My church was not a good support for me but my Sunday School class and my ladies' Bible study group was a great source of support. I also attend a Parents' Grief Support Group here in my town (or at least I did for about 2 years after Randi died). I don't attend much any more because I don't really feel I need it as much as I did at the beginning.

I don't know what people do if they don't already have a support cell in place before something like this happens to them. It is very difficult to find support afterwards. Had it not been for all the supportive people around me, I don't know if I could have made it or not. They let me talk about Randi and cry when I needed to and they cried with me because most of them knew Randi too. They don't remember much any more about when her birthday is or her death date, but I don't expect them to much any more. My daughter and I mostly are the only ones to remember.



As for a symbol for Randi, it is the butterfly because I think of her as being transformed into her new life.

Lamon and Barb Coldiron's son, Brandon (5-10-78), died in an auto accident, 11-5-97. Barb shares her thoughts on Mother's Day:

How will I perceive Mother's Day, May 10, 1998? Nineteen years ago on Mother's Day I held Brandon in my arms most of the day. This year on Mother's Day I will hold him in my heart. His birthday is Mother's Day this year, May 10th. Nineteen years ago on Mother's Day we brought him home from the hospital.

Brandon is now resting on a hill above our home in Beattyville, Kentucky. It's beautiful in Eastern Kentucky in the Spring. We have worked on the grave site since November. Grass is growing and is a luscious green, rhododendrons will be blooming inside the wooden fence, and hostas surround one of the big trees in the cemetery. The monument is black stone and his portrait is sketched in the stone.

This Mother's Day - I'll sit at the grave site and hold Brandon in my heart and cling to the memories. Patiently I'll be relying on God's healing touch.

We've chosen the symbols of a basketball with the number 11 in it and a bluebird. Brandon loved to watch bluebirds. A bluebird is supposed to brighten your day. Maybe I'll see a bluebird this Mother's Day.

Brandon's grandmother, Nina Cockerham wrote the following poem about Brandon.



BRANDON



Brandon, things of beauty leave their trace.

Memories are treasures time can not erase.

The greatest blessings are from above the gifts of faith, hope and love.

It's said a soul picks its family when it comes to earth.

And our fortunate family you chose for your birth.

To know you was to love you, with your caring heart.

And to love is to bond and of one another become part.

God loaned you to us a short eighteen years.

We were blessed to know you but your absence brings tears.

It's been such a short time since you went away.

We had no warning you were leaving that November day.

A heavenly angel held you tight. As you were carried away on your parting flight.

You're with our Savior, some family and special friend. Steve.

Since you are happy, why should we grieve?

We pray time finds a way to help us to heal..

From the sorrow and grief we now feel. To be worthy of God's trust we must be humble and pray to be approved by the

Master to join you someday.



Na-Na
December 1997

Since we are having a picnic, I suggest we have chocolate covered ants.

