



LAMENTATIONS



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I feel like I have been lost in a tunnel since I'm no longer writing the newsletter every month. I miss not expressing my grief and knowing that you will understand my feeble attempt; I miss you telling me about your child; I miss your expressions of grief and support; there is so much I miss, but I especially miss YOU!

This past week has really taken me back to the first weeks after Young Jim's death. The deaths in Colorado were so needless, as was Young Jim's, as were all of our children's deaths. For some crazy reason, after I hear of another child's death, I think "Okay, these will be the last children that will die" Am I crazy or do you feel that way also? How many more parents are going to have to face what we face every day? It is so important that we contact these new parents who are going to travel the same road as we. These parents need to know that they are not alone in their grief. **Those who have known a problem first hand are usually better able to help others walking through the same difficulty.**

As we "prepare" and, if you are like I, I have to prepare for Mother's Day. It is a day that I permit myself to fall if I need to. It is a Sunday that I don't go to church because I am not going to put myself through more torture than I already go through on that day. My husband is the same way about Father's day. We will be praying for you as we pray for ourselves.

After six years of writing newsletters, I still feel like Alison Zelinski who wrote:

Tell Me... How long should I grieve for my child? Who measures my love? Who measures my pain? Who has the right?

No word in the English language describes those who have lost a child. We are, simply, 'The Bereaved.' Pain and longing overwhelm us, defying description, when our child dies. We use words like "numb," "in shock" and "anguished," but these are just words, woefully inadequate to measure our pain. With time, the pain does diminish, but never ever disappears. Instead, the pain attacks, lying in wait for an unsuspecting moment, popping up in unexpected corners. Day and night, we never escape it; it is always there, lurking, waiting to capture us in unexpected moments. A thoughtless comment, a similarly named child, a child who laughs just so, resurrects our pain and our longing, inescapable and unintentionally cruel.

In an attempt to comfort us, well-intentioned people say to those of us who have lost a child: "You can have others" So? I want THAT one!! Children are not toys, replaceable like the batteries that run them. "He died quickly, that's a blessing." Huh?? "Be glad you have other kids who are healthy," they tell me. Of course I'm glad! I appreciate my living children, and their gifts, every moment of the day. Does that make my other child's death any less painful?" "You'll be stronger in the end." In the end of what? How strong do we have to be?

People say, "Hey, how are you?" Do they really want to know? Do they want to hear of our pain and longing for what we will never have again? My love for my living children is deep, all-encompassing, and forever. Why is it

so strange, then, that my love for my child who has died has an equal claim on my heart?

The deep and darkening silence from friends and family reveals that those who love us do not understand the ongoing nature of our loss. They cannot face our pain and anguish, nor can they face us. If they faced it, they would realize that it could well happen to them, which is a pain too deep for them to bear. There, but for the grace of God, goes the rest of the world.

I have tried to "get on." Waking up in the morning, isn't that "getting on?" I eat, and sleep and work, I teach and play with my surviving children. I laugh and cry with them and kiss their "owies" ... I AM "getting on" with life. Does "getting on" mean I cannot miss my child?

The death of our children does not mean we no longer love them or miss them. We will always grieve for what we no longer have and will never have again. The Bereaved grieve also for what might have been. Our children will not ride a bike, eat a sno-cone, get kissed. They will never know the joy of marriage and bearing children. My surviving children will reach these milestones and are a constant reminder that my child who died will not. How then, do I "get on?"

The death of a child leaves a hole in our lives forever. We step over and around the hole. On some days, we jump over the hole or can pass by it with hardly a glance; on other days we fall into it. The truth is, that hole cannot be filled--it is unique, one-of-a-kind. Tell me, how can we "get on" if we keep falling into the hole?

My grief is a measure of my love for my child, you cannot tell me to stop loving him/her, nor can you tell me to stop grieving him/her, to "get over it." I will not say his/her name to you if it bothers you, but neither do you ignore

that I have that child and loved him/her. Acknowledge that he/she lived and filled a purpose in this world, allow me to grieve as I need and accept my grief without judging the length or breadth of it.

Acknowledge my child. Acknowledge my grief. Acknowledge my right to decide how long and how hard I will love my living children, and how long, and how hard I will love and grieve for the son/daughter who died. And never ever forget that my son/daughter also LIVED!!!!

The following article, written by Larry Peppers and Ronald Knapp, gives a Father's perspective:

Say, "To h--- with what they say!" The unexpressed emotion is a product of a legal, rational word. This is a time for emotion. Let your feelings out! Whatever they might be, they are your feelings, they are valid, and they need to be expressed.

Crying does not invalidate manliness. It's much easier to play the expected role than it is to deviate. You might say it takes a man to let others see you cry.

Take or make time to be alone with her. Both of you need some time to steady yourselves before you have to cope with outside pressures and demands. This time can also get your grieving processes in tune with each other.

Include your partner in decision-making. Not only will it lessen your responsibilities, but it also may prevent future problems. Most often she wants to be included; exclusion may facilitate bitterness and resentment.

Realize other people simply don't understand you. Others are caught in the same cultural orientation that you are. Their comments to you have no malicious intent. Either let them know that you hurt, too, or ignore them.

Remember that you have rights. You may be led to believe that options are unavailable to you. Assert yourself Find out what they are.

Establish good communication with your partner. Nothing you can do is more important.

It often is helpful for fathers to find another man to share feelings with.

Attending monthly group meetings is an easy way to meet with other fathers who are dealing with common problems

Know that no two people grieve in the same way. Our personalities impact on the way we grieve. Do not put expectations on your partner. Unrealistic expectations create barriers.

You and your partner may feel differently about your sexual relationship at this time. It may be difficult for one of you to experience pleasure without feeling guilty.

Discuss your feelings, otherwise, disinterest in sex may be interpreted as rejection, talk about feelings. Express your love in other ways. Remember the love you share and why you came together in the first place.

Jim Brown gave some sage advice to fathers:

Just as Mother's Day was difficult and sad for bereaved mothers - June 20th is very difficult for bereaved fathers. I hunt, fish, camp, drive a fast car, play football, basketball and baseball, I am tough! I went to war. I am the toughest two-legged mammal alive. I am MAN.

While our son was still in the hospital, I cried alone so my wife wouldn't see me. At home I cried alone, in the shower, in the back yard, anywhere but in front of my wife. I had to be a rock.

After our son died, I helped support my wife in the best way I knew how. I was a rock for her to lean on. I was invincible. The rock caused more trouble than good. Soon, we were not talking or getting along with each other and I didn't understand why. My wife became angry. She told me. "You act like you don't love J.J" (because I didn't appear to be grieving.)

The rock became mush. I then realized what I had done. I had played MAN instead off just being a father and a husband. You see, a mother does not need a rock with no emotions. She needed me to show her that I did indeed love our son and that I was hurting after his death and that I did cry.

My wife comforted me later that night, after we had talked. I cried, she cried, we both needed it. I found out that it was good for me to cry and let my wife help me. I am MAN. I am a grieving man

who now does not mind crying in front of anyone. I cry for myself and for our son, J.J.

A Grieving Parent Is ...

A grieving parent is someone who will never forget their child no matter how painful the memories are.

A grieving parent is someone who yearns to be with their dead child but cannot conceive leaving their living ones.

A grieving parent is someone who has only part of a heart as the rest of it is buried with their child.

A grieving parent is someone who begs for relief from the memories which plague them and then feels guilty when they get it.

A grieving parent is someone who pretends to be happy and enjoying life when they really are dying inside.

A grieving parent is someone who holds the lives of their remaining children as the most precious gift they have.

A grieving parent is someone who can cry or laugh at the drop of a hat whenever they remember their beloved child.

A grieving parent is someone who feels as if they just lost their child yesterday no matter how much time has passed.

A grieving parent is someone who fears for their remaining family because they cannot bear to have any more loss.

A grieving parent is someone who sits by their child's gravestone and feels a knife stabbing their heart.

A grieving parent is someone who wants to help others who have lost loved ones because somehow their loss is theirs all over again.

-Judy Skapik

As I type these statements I am reminded of those who may not be the biological parents of many of our children we have lost to death, but they gave of themselves as only a father or mother can, and often without recognition. We honor you as the stepparents who loved our children. You are also honored on Mother's and Father's Day.

Grief Grafts

Art and Eleanor Foss' son, John (5-2-65), died from bladder cancer, 10-5-93. Art shared his thoughts in his poem:

CAN'T I?

Please! How do I stop the pain that I feel throughout each moment; The loss, the knowledge that I will never, in this life be whole again;

How do I stop the thoughts of the way he suffered, to spend a precious few more moments with us;

How do I stop the tears that collide with the earth that I stand on;

How do I stop the feeling that erupts like a spewing volcano whenever I hear his name, see his initials on a license plate, see a bird soaring in the blue or a small darting animal scooting across the road seeking a safe haven in the other side;

How can I be sure that he is safely on the other side, waiting for us to catch up?

I CAN'T.

John's symbols are an angel, yellow roses and a red BMW



Gam and Becky Greer have lost all of their 4 children. Stephen (3-27-77), died from Leukemia, 11-17-79. January 16, 1995, their oldest son, Buzzy (1-14-72) killed his younger brother Todd (11-29-80) and his younger sister Kami (8-7-84) and then himself. Larry Vaught, *Danville Advocate Messenger* wrote the following newspaper article about the Greer family March 3, 1999:

Player's memory inspires S. Laurel-When South Laurel plays Danville in the 12th Region Tournament semifinals Friday, there will be a black towel draped over the end chair on the South

It has been there for every game this season, and no way would South Laurel forget that towel when it comes to Boyle County for this game. The towel is monogrammed -- Todd Greer 21 -- in memory of Greer, who was shot and killed by his brother four years ago. The brother also shot and killed another sibling that day before eventually killing himself. South Laurel senior J.P. Storm is one of Greer's former teammates who wanted to dedicate this season to him and his parents as a way of showing they hadn't forgotten him and his family.

"We just wanted to do something special for what would have been his senior season," said Storm. "We all agreed on this. We leave a seat on the bench for him to symbolize having his spirit with us." South Laurel coach Steve Wright was touched when his players decided to dedicate the season to Greer and his parents. He knew it might provide some emotional times, but he also knew how meaningful the gesture would be to Greer's parents.

"I thought it was very special of the kids to be so thoughtful," Wright said. "His parents are wonderful people and this was a chance to do something for them."

Greer's mother, Becky Bottoms, is from Boyle County. Her sister, Barb Bottoms, lives here and her son, Robbie Bottoms, is a starting senior guard for Boyle. This year Robbie Bottoms asked to change his uniform number from 4 to 21 in memory of his cousin.

South Laurel beat Boyle to start the season. If both teams win Friday, they will play the regional title at Boyle Saturday. A South Laurel win in that game would almost be a fairy tale finish.

"I've never really thought about that, but to win the region at Boyle playing against Todd's cousin it would be a nice finish," Storm said. "I hope we do play. It would be a good match up if we get past Friday, and it would almost be too good to be true."

Wright already feels that way about Greer's parents. His father, Warren "Gam" Greer, did play by play for the South Laurel radio. Now he's working as part of the crew that provides a local television replay of all South Laurel

"It was really difficult for him to do the radio work," Wright said. "I think the TV work is a little easier on him."

Wright has not done anything seeking publicity for what his players had done for Greer's memory this year. He knew they didn't do it for publicity. However, the coach knows what the gesture has meant to the Greer's. "They are sort of the guiding light for our club," Wright said. "They have established a scholarship at the high school. They've donated money to the summer camp. They've helped us in a lot of ways." Wright probably will never forget the night when the Greer's told him what having the towel placed over a seat at every game meant to them. "They said what the towel did was open the door for them to come to the games," Wright said. "They feel Todd's spirit there. A person grieving thinks others forget. This gesture meant everything to them." At one game this season the managers forgot to bring the towel out.

"The players about whipped them" Wright said. "They were really upset. However, the towel has kept Wright's team from losing its focus. A miss shot or a loss is easy to keep in perspective with that reminder on the of the bench.

"I think the towel motivates us, it also gives us a perspective that basketball is only a game and life goes on no matter what happens," Storm "You realize basketball isn't life or death." That doesn't mean South Laurel's passion for winning has decreased and the Greers wouldn't want it. Each time though, that South Laurel has won a tournament title this the final strand of the net has been down by Gam Greer.

Wright's team would love to see Gam Greer cut that final strand on Saturday. It would be a perfect event for the Cardinals. However, when we lose, what the team has already for a former friend and his family what really matters. They have to bring a little happiness to a family which still has to be hurting and have made possible for the Greers to enjoy coming to South Laurel games. "At times, it has even been emotional for me, I never even had a chance toTodd." Wright said.

"But we something that happened and this is what the kid's wanted to do".

"I think it has taught us all some lessons about life." Take time Friday night if you're at the game to look at the end of the South Laurel bench. There's a life lesson there about compassion we could use.

When South Laurel played their last home game, the players each had a rose that the Greers assumed were for their mothers and fathers since they were introduced and stand on the basketball court with their sons. However, after all the parents were introduced, the players took the roses to Gam and Becky. What a wonderful display or love for both of them and Todd.



Stephen's symbol is an apple,



Buzzy's symbol is a guitar,



Kami's symbol is a horse and



Todd's symbol is a UK basketball.

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

I hope the seasons have come and gone for you this past year with the gentleness you deserve. I suppose I have reached a kind of acceptance in my loss of Jeremy. I've always realized I couldn't change it, but I have always wanted so much to have him near. My memories are as vivid as always and for that I am so grateful. I am pretty much left to my own thoughts concerning him other than when I'm around Carrie and Nathan. He is now, and I believe will always be, very much present when either two or three of us are together. Beyond the immediacy of us though no one much ever mentions him. I will occasionally be at some function where I run into parents of some of Jeremy's friends and the mothers will look at me and make eye contact and I see in their eyes the recognition of the pain we mothers carry within us. They will most often simply say they had been thinking of the person who could find the words that would somehow "say" how our pain feels.

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

Andrew Gutsell (18) died from a congenital heart defect 8-6-93. Andrew's parents, Terry and Kathy Jo have dedicated their lives to helping the terminally ill. The following article appeared in the **Herald Leader of Lexington, KY** about, Terry Gutsell, medical director for Hospice of Bluegrass:

Center tries to make end of life less painful for the terminally ill, By Krista Larson. A photo with Dr. Terence Gutsell and patient Anna Mullins is at his Nicholasville Road office. The Palliative Care Center opened last month. He also began a palliative care consulting service at St. Joseph Hospital. Anna Mullins has colon cancer. While she doesn't need hospice care, she needs relief from chronic pain.

"It's been a big help," said Mullins, 60, who undergoes treatment at the new Palliative Care Center of the Bluegrass on Nicholasville Road. The outpatient care facility is aimed at helping patients like Mullins control their symptoms earlier on in their life limiting illness. While traditional health care attempts to cure an illness, palliative care focuses on treating symptoms and easing pain. It has long been available through other services offered by Hospice of the Bluegrass, but only to patients with six or fewer months to live who have ended aggressive treatment, nurse Joyce Leiningger said.

Congress's 1983 Medicare Hospice Benefit Act defined end of life care as six or less months. But that gives palliative care specialists a limited amount of time with a patient, said Terence Gutsell, medical director for Hospice of the Bluegrass.

"We'd like to see the patient earlier in their terminal illness," Gutsell said.

The center, which is the only private practice outpatient clinic devoted to palliative care, opened Jan. 6. About 28 patients have been treated so far, Gutsell said.

The center aims to treat any distressing symptoms, whether physical, emotional or spiritual. It's aimed at improving the quality of life for both patients and their families, palliative will continue to grow as a specialty as US population ages" Gutsell said.

"If death is our enemy, then we physicians are destined to lose because all of our patients are going to go" Gutsell said. "My enemy is a poor quality of life."

Giving control to patients is key said Gretchen Brown, president of Hospice of the Bluegrass. "This is a way to give patients quality and control over their lives," Brown said. "People won't feel so helpless." That sense, no hopelessness comes when a doctor say nothing else can be done, said Gutsell, who began an inpatient consulting service, the Palliative Care Team, at St. Joseph Hospital last month.

"Actually, there's a lot that can be done," he said. "They may not have hope for a long life, but hope is reformed in terms of quality of life issues." For more information, call Palliative Care Center of the Bluegrass at (606) 278-4869.

The United States Postal Service is sued a commemorative hospice car stamp. About 100 million stamps designed to symbolize life's journey to its final stage, will be issued, said William Messer, Lexington's acting postmaster. The stamp costs 33 cents.

The following article appeared in the Lexington Herald-Leader about Kathy, entitled "Soothing the way," - One Woman's Story:

Harpist plays for the terminally ill. Before August 1993, Kathy Jo Gutsell said she had it all; four great kids, a loving husband, a 63 acre horse farm and a position she loved as choir director at St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Lexington,

Then she got a phone call.

Gutsell said she was packing for a family vacation to Michigan when her husband took her by the arm, led her to the family room and told her that their oldest son, Andrew, 18, had died suddenly of heart failure that morning.

That's when her life changed. "The first year there was no thought, just pain," Gutsell said. "A year later, (my husband) said, I want to work in Hospice.' I couldn't believe it because

One year after the death of her oldest son, Kathy Jo Gutsell and her husband, Terry, moved their family to Cleveland, Ohio.

There, Terry began studying about hospice care.

Kathy Jo began taking harp lessons. Her goal was to play at the bedsides of terminally ill patients.

She now does so each Thursday at Hospice of the Bluegrass.

"I feel like Andrew led us right to where we are now," she said. "I had to clear my life out to add something new."

Playing for the terminally ill meant finding a teacher. Rather than look in the Yellow Pages, Gutsell visited a folk harp store. She asked for the best harp teacher in town.

And that's what she got.

Gutsell trained with Jocelyn Chang, a classically trained harpist.

Her first lesson was August 4, 1995, her 45th birthday. She did not own a harp, so she rented one for \$30 a month.

The first lesson was enchanting.

"I was smitten when my fingers first touched the strings," she said.

Unlike the first toot on a clarinet or the initial breath into a flute, the first few strums of a harp by a novice do not grate on the nerves.

The primary strums, Gutsell said, calm the senses while weaving serenity into the air.

At the same time, that is what she needed most.

"When I first started learning, I would just play and cry, play and cry," she said. "I was just feeling so sad about Andrew."

Six months after her first lesson, Gutsell's fingers were gliding over the harp's strings producing simple, but recognizable tunes.

She made her bedside debut, however, without her harp.

Gutsell said she simply went to a dying man's home and sang a cappella for him. She began with Gregorian chants because she had heard of someone else singing them for terminally ill patients. It was a tough crowd. "Do you know something in English?" the man asked. "I don't like that stuff" he said.

She then sang **Amazing Grace**.

After moving back to Lexington, Gutsell began playing her harp for patients at St. Joseph Hospital in fall 1996. Since then she has played for hundreds of dying patients and their families.

When she brings her folk harp, carved from curly maple wood, into a patients room, Gutsell hopes her music brings some peace to the patients.

"I long to be an instrument of helping," she said. "I'm trying to help them make the transition into death, a blessed death, a more peaceful death. I want to bring beauty into the room."

Gutsell was born in Lexington. She is the third oldest of eight children. Hers was a musical family, said Gutsell, who plays piano in addition to playing the harp and singing.

"We sang in the house, sang in the car, everywhere," she said. "Everywhere there was music."

Around age 3, Gutsell's family moved to Chicago. She returned to Lexington at age 21.

She was working as a nurse at the University of Kentucky Chandler Medical Center when she met Terry, her husband.

On Wednesday they will celebrate their 26th wedding anniversary.

Gutsell left nursing about 11 years ago. She chose to home school her two youngest children Michael and Jessie.

In 1997, she returned to nursing on an on call basis at Jessamine County Hospital.

She is glad, she said, that she chose nursing over music as a profession.

"I never wanted music to be a business or a job or a competition," she said. "It's a self expression, heartfelt thing."

Andrew's symbol is UK basketball.



Emma Knight's son, Terry (3-23-64), was stabbed to death, 9-22-78. A Christmas card sent by Emma Knight also had the following poem:

**MY SHINING STAR
You Will Always Be In My
Heart**

Everyday I think of you thinking the good times and the bad.

Reliving all the memories thinking about the great times we had.

Although you're in a better place sometimes I ask myself why.

It had to be my dearest son, my dearest son to die.

Sometimes I sit back at night to fight lots of tears.

Knowing it doesn't help a thing just puts away my tears. Everyday that comes along I feel getting closer to you wishing about the stars at night hoping I was there too.

Remember we will always be together.

We're not that far apart, but remember my son, my angel, my love you will always be in my heart.

Terry's symbol is a star.



Joe and Susan Walters' son Ralph (10-31-88), was killed in a truck accident, 7-29-93. Susan writes: Joe and I have had the unexpected surprise of two young people who have become part of our lives these past two years, and they, like Ralph was and would have ever been, have been the focus of much of our time and energy, admittedly mine more so than his. Rodrigo come into our lives in July of 1997, when he arrived on campus with the understanding that one of my students from his hometown in Brazil, had made arrangements for him to begin English classes. This was not the case and I ended up helping him get into an intensive program to another school. He was a nice boy that needed help, and that's what I try to do in my job, and that was that! But in a few weeks he called and asked if he could come for the weekend. He and Joe hit it off because of the computer, which is a fascination for both of them. He kept calling, calling, and then I'd call to check on him. Over that semester he had adopted us and we him. He came here to school last January, and by the time he left for home that May some pretty profound changes had happened in me. I had begun to feel somewhat like a mom again.

When I began this job at the college it had been in an effort to have more time with Joe and to have something to do with my time. Those were legitimate reasons in my situation, I thought, and I did a good job at what needed doing for the students. I was very clear, though, that this was only a three day a week involvement and that was all. I liked the students, but I kept my distance. I just didn't recognize that until after Rodrigo went home last May. After he left I realized that my attitude toward all the students had changed. I wanted to be with them now, not just because I had been hired to do a job for them, but because I genuinely cared about and liked them. They did me good, even though they were, like any young persons, frustrating at times! Madonna's song, "Frozen" was out then. It says, "you're frozen if your heart's not broken." I realized that I had been frozen because my heart had been broken. When God used Rodrigo to treat me like a mom again it was as if I melted, not only on him but on the rest of the students too. God had been easing me into this awareness with Allie two summers before, and Keila the past summer. These two women had reached out to me without my doing so to them, but I had not realized how I had closed people off until I there was a boy that I could relate to Ralph. Life is such a process and I have so much to learn. But that learning is my passion now, and so the processes a good one, though not always easily understood.

Last summer Katia also became part of us, and this is such fun because she's not only good for me, but also for Joe. She had been here at school for sometime, but typical of me then I hadn't really gotten to know her, as she had had no major problems that had required my intervention. In the spring I had occasion to be involved with her and found I really liked her. She's honest and smart and, along with the fun that is Katia there is a profundity and a seeking that are so attractive to me. She worked with Joe on computer projects over the summer, and I came to truly love her, not only for what she meant to me, but for what she did for Joe. As Rodrigo had treated me like a mom, she began to treat Joe like a dad. She talked computer with him, told him

things, solicited his opinion, wanted to spend time with him, and could make him talk and laugh and tell his stories. She made him more alive than he'd been since the accident. Just like we so appreciate those who are good to our children, likewise this girl who was good to and appreciated my husband came to mean all the more to me. She is truly a good and wise friend for me, and she considers me her mom here. How good that is for me and for Joe.

Rodrigo transferred to Eastern Kentucky University in January, after two months of living here at the house, six weeks of which his mom was here visiting from Brazil. Katia began a Master's in Computer Science at Western Kentucky University this past August. They are both doing well in their new endeavors and we see them pretty often, as both schools are just an hour and a half away, though in two different directions. (As I finish this Katia and a friend are upstairs watching the Super Bowl with Joe.) I always felt like Ralph was here to teach me, and still know that he does that though he is not physically present with me. I think God and he sent these two along for the same reason, and for our mutual benefits. Katia and Rodrigo both have a very strong sense of who Ralph is, and respond to him much like a brother they never met. Of course that does me good, and indeed they could have never reached my heart if that had not been the case. There again are frustrations, mainly related to my never having had the experience of raising a teenager, but I am convinced they are supposed to be part of us. We know both sets of parents in Brazil and feel accepted by them as a part of extended family for these two young people.

As far as how Ralph's moneys have been used this past year, much of that has gone toward the above mentioned! We did also give an amount toward a new children's park here in town. It was given by "Joe, Susan and Ralph Walters, in honor of Ralph's grandparents, Ralph and Laura Tesseneer." Contributions from "Ralph's Fund," housed in the Foundation for the Roanoke Valley, went this year toward continued efforts with a Cub Scout troop that it helped start last year. Money in Ralph's memory was also given to the University to build a press box for the football program here. This building turned out really

well and folks here seem proud of the new addition at the football field. The four-floor structure houses a concession and rest room area, storage area, president's box and media center, in that order. Through this gift Joe obtained the right to handle all of the sports concessions at the school. The small business, "Tiger Concessions" by JSRW, has gotten off to a good start this year, profits from which were contributed back to the school in the form of a corporate sponsorship for the basketball team. Joe is enjoying that involvement and through it we are being able to provide several student jobs on campus.

These are the things that come to mind to share, and I do so in hopes that this may update you on our lives. We do have some trips planned to Portugal and Italy in the spring and early summer. We are excited about Katia's upcoming trip to Austria over Spring Break to visit special friends. Rodrigo will travel to Brazil over the summer and we plan to spend next Christmas there. So we're roaming and staying at home it seems. Joe and I continue to feel blessed that we love each other even as we both change with our life situation, ever effected by Ralph's absence here.

Ralph's symbols are International children



John and Brenda Manz's son, Nathan (11-23-74), was accidentally asphyxiated, 8-18-92. The following poem was written by Leah Wall, in memory of Nathan Manz:

I Never Had The Chance

*I never had the chance to know you.
You came and left too quickly.
A golden angel, hair falling into the
eyes of a mischievous child.
I watched from afar, always
wanting to speak, but never
finding the way. I wanted so
badly to be close to you, to
know what was going on inside*

your head. I found your lack of constant chatter intriguing to say the least.

Now my heart feels like it's being crushed by an evil hand.

I want it not to be true. I want you to stay at least

to give me a chance.

"Cause now that you're gone,

I realize I never even had the chance to say. ..

I Love You.

The following "BEREAVED BIRTHDAYS" was also written for Nathan Manz:

Birthdays are a time for celebration, not a time for tears.

But what happens when the birthdays no longer mark the years? A birthday marks the moment a spirit enters earthly life to share its special love and joy and learn from earthly strife.

Before a spirit comes to us, it knows when and how it must depart.

It chose its path carefully, we are honored from the start. The sadness we now feel on such a joyous day is longing for our loved one's touch. It's natural to feel this way.

For even though the birthdays no longer mark a spirit's stay, love continues on forever to touch us everyday. I hug my precious memories closer to my heart and honor my beloved spirit child who chose me from the start.

The lyrics written from "Casey's Heartstrings" are with love from, Annette.

What a loud racket ringing in my ears. My son, you must quiet down your music, before the neighbors call the cops, I fear. Hark, no one else can hear it, for you have gone away. It is only in my memories that your music deafens me. How I long to hear that ROCK-AND-ROLL, a sweet summer symphony, now that you are gone. My child, play for just a little while, in your heavenly home. Save the rest for me, so I can hear sweet music to my ears, when God calls me home.

Nathan's symbol are an electric guitar, an artist's palette and the silhouette of a cat.



Brenda always signs her letters: Hugs & Sunshine, Brenda, mom to Nathan, forever 17.

Marcia Carson's son, Dell (12-22-69), was murdered [2-]5-9] Marcia wrote:

It is now 6 years and it still feels like yesterday. I am still waiting for him to come storming into the house.

David Fisher, the murderer of my son Dell, was found guilty of Malicious Murder, Felony Murder, Use of a Fire Arm During Commission of a Crime and Use of a Fire Arm by a Convicted Felon. He was given Life plus 5 years. He will never again be able to harm another child.

This is what I have been working on for year 6.

Jarvis Lydell (JIHAD) Carson
12-22-69/12-15-91

MISSING YOU, STILL,

No song has been sung

No words have been read

That can help me

Deal with you being dead

Son, I once was blind

But now I see

You were always God's child

You did not belong to me

I often wondered where

God was when you died

He was preparing your place

To be at his side

I never want to say good-bye

I think I never will

But son, you were happy here

I know you are happy still

I thought my world was perfect

How was I to know

The degree of the pain

When you had to go

I can not see the sunshine

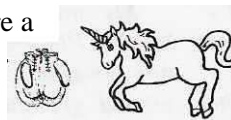
When it is shining bright I

only bear the darkness

of you not in my life

Loved and Missed Forever
Your Mother, Marcia Carson

Dell's symbol's are a unicorn and boxing gloves.



Lawrence and Anna Martin's son, Bob (1-26-48), died from Diabetes and AIDS, 2-28-95. Bob was very interested

in making people understand AIDS.

Bob was a TennCare Specialist for Nashville CARES. Bob was previously employed by General Motors in Fairfield, Ohio, for over twenty years and then became a certified professional photographer in 1992. Previously Chairman of the Board of Directors of AIDS Volunteers of Cincinnati, he spearheaded Cincinnati's first major AIDS fund raiser and founded "Stop AIDS," one of Cincinnati's first AIDS educational programs.

*Bob wrote and conducted the video documentary, **Tim, One Voice From The Darkness**, winner of a Blue Chip Cable Access Award.*

Bob's symbols are a camera, a swan, and an AIDS ribbon.



Earl and Carol Sias' son, Greg (9-29-77), was killed in an auto accident, 11-5-97. The following poem was written by Dael Poulsen who wrote this poem for Carol, and she wanted to share it with all of us. Carol also encouraged us to share the poem with others.

*It seems so short a time,
That you were by my side.
Your eyes were bright and wondering,
Your smile big and wide.
But upon reflection I know,
That the time has past,
And you've gone on without me, With
angels your lot now cast.*

*The pain I felt at your passing
Is often sharp and deep.
And oft times there's not' to do
But silently sit and weep.*

*I miss your daily presence,
Your voice, your touch and joy.
The laughter and your sorrow,
As you were growing to man from
boy.
As I recall time spent together, With
you a child here.*

*I feel your love around me
And you are very near.*

*Oh, I do take comfort
In knowing where you are,*

*In god's care and keeping,
So near but yet so far.*

*I look forward to the day,
When once again we'll be,
A family all together,
To face eternity.*



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



Mary Greco's daughter, Gina (3-7-61), died from leukemia, 3-2-98. Mary shares:

Gina lost her battle with leukemia after having gone through so much. As a mom, I feel I should have saved her and not allowed this terrible thing to happen, but that was not to be.

Gina was a ballet dancer/teacher working with American Ballet Theatre in New York City, prior to her death. You would have loved her as everyone did.

Her symbols are the Cheshire cat (she loved "Alice in Wonderland," and, of course, ballet



Luciana (1-20-79), the daughter of Lucia and Skip Bayne, was accidentally shot 4-30-94. Lucia wrote the following on Luciana's birthday:

Today is my oldest daughter Luciana's birthday. She would be 20 years old. .. I miss her so much .. Well, I went to the cemetery this afternoon and placed some balloons at her grave site.

I found a balloon with a format of a heart with an ANGEL design and written Happy Birthday. I thought it was just perfect. I also bought 5 colorful balloons, since this is my 5th year without her. One blue, one white, one pink, one purple and one yellow which was her favorite color. I placed the Heart Angel balloon on her plaque. The others I tied at the tree I have planted next her grave site. And then I began to tell her how much I love her, how much I miss her, and that I would love to have her here to celebrate her b'day but I knew she was in a better place, in the kingdom of God, with Jesus and I knew she has many friends up there to celebrate with her. Well, as soon as I finished my talking one

of the balloons popped!!!!!! The yellow one! And a piece of it came right next to me. I grabbed it and I looked at it. It has the format of a heart!!!!!!

I thanked God for He is so wonderful to me. I have no doubt it was a sign from the Lord to me, once again to let me know that my sweet girl rests in peace and The Lord knows when I need a sign to lift me up in moments of sadness. He is so great!!! Never fails me. Never, ever. When I need Him He is always there to show me compassion, mercy and grace. Praise Him! I left the place smiling. .. went to get Michael and Melissa at school. I showed them the piece of yellow balloon and asked them what do they see ... they immediately said "a heart." I asked a couple other friends at church, and also to my husband. Everybody sees the heart on this little piece of yellow balloon. I will keep it in my wallet as a reminder of the faithfulness of our Lord and a gift from Luciana.

I just wanted to share this little story with you my friends on line. It goes to my journal. It will be a precious memory for me, to be put with so many others I have written before, as the Lord continues to show me wonderful signs when I need them the most. ..

Luciana's symbols
are angels.



Rick, the 30-year-old son of Sherron Moore, died 6-7-92. Sherron gave the following speech at the annual remembrance service in from of our state capitol:

*9th Annual Candlelight Vigil of Remembrance and Hope
Mothers Against Drunk Driving of
Kentucky
Saturday, November 21, 1998
5:00p.m. at
The State Capitol
Frankfort, Kentucky*

My name is Sherron Westerfield Moore. I'm proud to be a 6th generation daughter of Kentucky. I was in the second graduating class at Franklin County High School here in Frankfort. I've come here tonight, as did all of you, to honor the memory of my precious son, my only child, who suffered and died as the result of one

man's decision to drive a tractor-trailer truck after drinking alcohol. We later learned that the driver regularly drank before going on the road because, in his words, "he could handle it."

You and I are joined by a painful common bond. But, through our sharing with each other, our compassion, and our understanding, we find the courage to go on with our lives. And, by speaking out and educating people about the tragic consequences of consuming alcohol and then getting behind the wheel of an automobile or truck, we will hopefully spare others the indescribable pain and heartache that we here tonight know all too well.

My son, Richard Maxwell Stepp, died 6 years ago, 5 days after his 30th birthday, after spending 112 days in intensive care in a hospital burn unit with burns over 95% of his body. The pervasive numbness, the tightness in my chest and throat, and the nightmares finally stopped 2 long years after Rick's death.

Enough time has passed now that other people feel comfortable asking me about my son or how he died. I hear myself responding, and adding that I am doing much better, thank you for asking. In Truth, while I have come to terms with this whole experience on an INTELLECTUAL level, I've had more difficulty with the EMOTIONAL aspects of it.

There are days when I miss my son so much. I feel an overwhelming need to see him, to hear his voice on the phone, to hug him and feel his warmth and smell his sweet skin, to receive a card or letter from him. How can I convey to anyone else but you here tonight that every cell of my body MISSES him!? Few people I know have experienced this dreadful sensory deprivation, this void that results from the absence of my son in my life.

When Rick was alive, ALL of me was, too. No matter how many miles separated us during the course of our lifetime together, I KNEW every millisecond that he was out there somewhere and that we were CONNECTED, an inextricable PART of each other. I would even imagine how his day must

be going, and try to envision him in my mind's eye as he went about his life. Then there would be a card or letter in my mailbox, and his poetic, child-like prose would sing to me and my heart would swell with happiness and pride. In an effort to cram onto a small piece of paper all that he was doing and feeling, his sentences ran on and his vibrancy seemed to spill off the paper into my lap. I would smile to myself shake my head and wonder whether my son would ever learn to express himself with more order and precision. He was still "becoming."

If the truth be told, I still deeply resent the pressures put on me by others to be sensible and composed when discussing Rick, the crash, his injuries, his suffering, his death. I don't know how to say out loud the hurt that I feel inside. It is impossible to condense the magnitude of his injuries and suffering into a few descriptive sentences in an attempt to convey to another living soul what it was like for Rick, or for me.

I remember sitting in the hospital waiting room, passing time until the next visiting hour. Sometimes I would try to imagine what was going on back in intensive care. What was going on in Rick's mind? It bothered me tremendously that he could not speak because of the tracheotomy and so I had no real idea of what he was thinking or feeling. I could not know how much the drugs interfered with his thoughts.

The medical staff told me Rick responded to their directions and that he worked with them when they were attending to him or during the 2-hour process of changing his bandages, TWICE every day. Still, what could he have been THINKING? Did he know his girlfriend was killed in the crash? What would he have asked me or said to me if he could have spoken?

Did he understand how gravely he was injured? Did he know his family was there with him, within a short distance if not next to his bed every moment? Did he know when they amputated his arm, or the fingers of his other hand? Did he know there really never was any hope for him?

Meanwhile, I had to eat, sleep, go to the grocery, buy stamps and gasoline, and go about some semblance of ordinary life while Rick lay in his hospital bed hooked up to more

machines than I had ever seen. He struggled to live while I did my laundry. I was his mother, yet I could do nothing more for him. I, who had nurtured and protected him in his childhood, could only stand by passively and try to keep my composure while he suffered more than I could possibly know. I was unable to protect him. I could not save him. I could not kiss him and tend to his needs. My life and his were no longer within my grasp. We were both being whisked along by a current that was taking us in two separate directions.

For 30 years I was "Mommy," "Mom," "Mother." I saw my fair skin and freckles, as well as part of my spirit, on another human being. His nose was a combination of his father's and Aunt Lucy's. Until his death, I never ceased to have a sense of wonderment at his beauty. I marveled at the grace in his fingers and hands. The slight cleft in his chin, a remnant of his father's. He had such unusual eyes, gold flecks sprinkled in a hazel rim. And a smile that would light up my heart. I loved his laugh. His mind was bright, quick, curious. His heart was good, sincere, seeking to know the truth about life and God. Perhaps he has now found what he was searching for and it is I who must continue looking for the answers.

Many of us have learned sadly how thoughtless others can be with their comments. Recently a woman said to me that after 6 years, I must be "over it" by now. Biting my tongue, I could only stare at her in disbelief as I tried to calm the fury her comment set off inside me. All I could manage to reply was, "The death of one's child is not something you "get over." You get **used to it**, but you never get over it."

I work and tend to my responsibilities. I go to movies, pay my bills, laugh at my dogs. But, I am not "all right." It is not all right. That Rick is dead, that he was horribly burned, that he suffered. .. none of that is all right with me. Not now. Not ever. The harsh reality of it all is indescribably painful to my soul.

It is difficult for me to find joy in anything. It is difficult to come to terms with being in life alone. I miss my son. It is not all right with me that he is gone. I am lonely for him. I am filled with sadness and longing. I ache for him. I am so sorry for what he had to

experience.

I am left with those awful words, **IF ONLY**.. Since the day Rick was born, I had hoped. ...I had hoped so much.....Now, there is no hope. No hope in my heart. I exist and I'm not sure why._ For 30 years I was Rick's mother. Now, I am just me. Alone. Disconnected from the love of that beautiful person who was my son and my blessing. It is difficult to imagine my future life. I will have no grandchildren. Rick will not be there for me as I grow old. Rick is no longer here. Yet here am I. And, I struggle to live one day at a time.

In the darkness of my night, I remember the words of our Lord, "Blessed are they who mourn, for they **shall** be comforted." May we all find comfort and healing tonight and in the days and nights to come.

To those of you listening to me who think, like the driver who killed my son, that you can handle it when you make the choice to drive after drinking alcohol, I urge you to consider this. Could you really handle being responsible for killing another person and destroying the lives of those who love him or her? Good night, drive safely, and may God bless and keep you and your loved ones from harm.

Sherron also wrote about being with another parent who has lost a child:

The 8-year-old daughter of my soul mate, my spiritual sister and best friend, was murdered some 8 years before I met her. Each year on the anniversary of that dreadful event, I took her to a funny movie, for a walk on the beach, to lunch, and one year to Disney World when we both lived in Sarasota, FL. But I spend that day with her. And she knew she could talk about her daughter or not, or cry if she wanted to. Now, my son's death date is just 6 days before her daughter's. And we've decided that each year we will spend that week together for loving support. This past June, she drove down from CT and I drove up from here (Danville) and we met in PA at a 2-day conference. Then we went to the finger lakes region of NY near Ithaca. What a blessing she is to me.

Rick's symbols are a rainbow and the pink panther.



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

We bereaved families have friends from all over the world and have a common bond which keeps us united even when we don't hear from each other very often. I have had a setback in my work with families due to my having become recently divorced. I am needing to give myself time to rest in the arms of our heavenly Father to build up my emotional and spiritual resources to get hack out in the bereavement world as it fakes so much out of you. You know what it's like.

God gave me a special gift in October and allowed me to travel to Israel with 42 wonderful the Mary Whelchel Christian Working woman's Tour and it was a very special trip for me and it has brought me into a closer relationship with who Jesus really is in my life.

My ministry has now taken a different path and the newsletter, Alive Again, is on hold for the time being. For the past 6 months I have been working to establish a tri-region homicide support environment. We are the Homicide Survivors of Northeast Georgia and we serve an area of 4 counties in 3 different regions. We have one unit meeting for over a year and are beginning the second group in January. Quarterly, all the regions will meet together with speakers and workshops. I hope in the spring to issue the newsletter again but it will be strictly a homicide newsletter as I feel God is leading me to work specifically in this area.



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

David and Helen Gardener's son, Curt (10-16-76), died 11-20-95. Helen tells about her penny collecting in the February, 1997 newsletter. This is the latest:

Hope you remember my penny story form 2 years ago. My 3rd year ended

November 20. Counted my found money this year and it was \$33.53. So was able to buy a lot for our church nursery this year. I have really been blessed with finding change this last year and have started out well again this year.

As I start out my walk I always ask God for 3 pennies. I feel if I find 3 pennies a day and a dime once in awhile I will have \$1 a month. I think that's great And I did much better than that this last year. When we were kids there were all these put down jokes. Such as, when you were born you asked God for brains and He thought you said trains and missed yours. One day last week I did my normal asking for 3 pennies. As I continued my walk I found a ball point pen. I usually pick them up and give them away. If I don't pick them up the next day they are run over and a mess everywhere. I continued my walk and found another pen. But pennies were not on my walk that day. When I found the third pen I started to laugh as I thought about those old put down jokes. God I said Pennies not Pens. But he gave me 3.

Curt's symbols are an L open book and an etemity cross.



Frank and Beth, Russell's son, Casey (1-13-84), died in a train accident 6-20-94. Beth E-mailed the following:

The Gift of Grief

"Death takes away. That's all there is to it. But grief gives back. By experiencing it, we are not simply eroded by pain. Rather, we become larger human beings, more compassionate, more aware, more able to help others, more able to help ourselves. Grief is powerful. It plunges us into the depths of sorrow and forces us to face the mightiness life, the mightiness of death, and the meaning of our existence here on this earth. It does more than enable us to change: if demands it. The way we change is up to us. It is possible to be forever bowed by grief. It is possible to be so afraid of one aspect of it that we become frozen in place, stuck in sorrow, riveted in

resentment or remorse, unable 10 move on.

But it is also possible to be enlarged, to find new direction, and to allow the memory of the beloved person we have lost to live on within us, not as a monument to misery but as a source of strength, love and inspiration. By acting on our grief, we can eventually find within ourselves a place of peace and purposefulness. It is my belief that all grievers, no matter how intense their pain, no matter how rough the terrain across which they must travel, can eventually find that place within the hearts."

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



Joe and Elaine Stillwell suffered a double loss, Peggy (8-23-66) and Denis Q'Connor (2-4-65), died in an auto accident 8-2-86 and 8-6-86. Elaine is very busy as you can tell by her letter:

Dear Friends,

Another wonderful year of retirement has passed and this one had a great start. On Dec. 28th we welcomed our first grandchild, Christopher John Albanese, a healthy 8 lb. 2 oz., looking like his mom, a real "O'Connor." I didn't get my "Elaine Marie" as everyone predicted! Annie had a tough delivery and ended up with a C section, just the way she was born. Taking a "leave of absence" from her Social Worker job, she has enjoyed every minute of being a "stay-at-home" mother. New life has brought great joy to all of us. Joe wins the prize for best "baby sitter" and "baby photographer!"

In January, Joe and I became Chapter Leaders again of The Compassionate Friends (TCF) of Rockville Centre, a bereavement support group we founded in 1987 and led until 1994. Over 1300 families have walked through the doors after the death of a child. So we're busy preparing a monthly meeting and Newsletter, in addition to answering phone calls and doing community outreach - just being there for hurting people

Working with Millennia Consulting, I have been the guest speaker at various local bereavement support programs for the major holidays like Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter and Mother's Day. I enjoy designing the program, what I'm going to say, music I will use and any special poetry or prayer I will share. It's using all my old "lesson plan" skills from teaching. I'm actually "teaching" a new audience and I don't have any discipline problems or annoying principal to endure! My speaking stipends go to the Peggy and Denis Scholarship Fund, which is now just shy of the \$53,000 mark.

Our grandson was baptized on March 1, in his home parish, St. Frances DeChantal, which did a beautiful job conferring the sacrament. Christopher wore our family's "official" Christening dress, which started with Denis III in 1965 and he became the 13th little Christian to be welcomed into the church in it.

On May 15th, my life was interrupted by a violent petunia, which I tripped over while I was planting my spring flowers on the front 40 of our estate. With Joe and Max watching, I broke my right wrist which really left me helpless. Thank God for Joe who faithfully buttoned and zipped me. I canceled my trip to Nashville, for the TCF National Conference.

Most exciting this June was the publishing of my very first book, **SWEET MEMORIES**, by Centering Corporation of Omaha, NE. It is a hands on crafts paperback book for grieving children, filled with ways to make things to help them remember and share their special person. Sales have been very good so far according to my publisher. Hospice groups have snatched it up very quickly. We have our fingers crossed to get it into the school book clubs. There is also talk of publishing it in hard cover, making it even better for gift giving and sturdier for libraries to include on their shelves. Marketing is a slow process, as I have noted since I started in June, but little by little good things are happening. It is available through the Internet bookstores of Barnes and Noble and Amazon Books! All the proceeds go to my children's Scholarship Fund at the University of Dayton. To celebrate the publishing of my book,

Elaine and Jerry Good hosted a "champagne party" toasting me and Sweet Memories and the "beginning of my new career." Even Christopher attended and I think stole the spotlight!

During the summer, I wrote 5 brochures for the Millennia "I Can Survive" Grief Series of 21 brochures (to be purchased by funeral homes for their aftercare programs), printed by Abigail Press of Brooklyn. I wrote the ones entitled: *Helping Your Heart After the Loss of a child*, *Why Try a Support Group*, *Helping Children Through Grief*, and *Books to Help Grieving Hearts (adults)*, and *More Books to Help Grieving Hearts (children)*. They feature a new concept, printed in various vivid colors and written in a warm, first person style. I was thrilled to be included in this venture which debuted in October, up in Boston, at the National Convention for Funeral Directors.

Joe actually gave up smoking on May 18th cold turkey!!! Since then, he has gained 25 pounds, still looks very handsome, but doesn't fit into anything. We don't know what is more expensive, cigarettes at \$3.75 a pack or a new wardrobe!!! I call him "Elaine, Jr." I was supposed to give up eating, but I haven't done that yet.

My North Merrick Retired Teachers Association needed a Newsletter Editor, so I volunteered to put that together starting in Jan. It's only twice a year, not every month like our TCF Newsletter. I have always enjoyed writing and now with my computer, it's actually fun. Joe and I truly love being part of the "Computer Age" especially the e-mail part. You can reach us at estillwe@optonline.net

I was commissioned as a Eucharist Minister last Dec. and have been bringing communion to the patients at Mercy Hospital, two blocks from us. It is a joy for both the patients and me. I am usually the Lector at 9:00 a'clock Sunday Mass in Mercy's Chapel and sometimes fill in as Eucharist Minister when they need help.

In September, the Diocese of Rockville Centre chose a new Director of its Family Ministry Office, Dr. Patrick Del Zappa, a nationally known clinical thanatologist, with a deep sense of spirituality and a very warm personality.

We met in late September and he asked me to be his "Coordinator for the Ministry to the Bereaved" involving the 139 parishes of the diocese. He wears many hats: overseeing programs for Baptism, PreCana and Marriage, Divorced and Separated Catholics, Rainbows for Children, Right to Life, etc. I gladly accepted because there is such a need for grieving families to know programs, but there is so much more to do. I will be "Bionic Woman" for the diocese you should see my job description!! The Lord sure keeps making my journey a very interesting one.

Joe stands right beside me in all these endeavors, empowering me with his wonderful support and blessing. He makes daily runs to the Post Office, mailing information requested from phone calls; packs up all the boxes of supplies and lugs them to the desired destination; cheers book sales on; and critiques all my speeches. He also slices his throat with his index finger, indicating to me it's time to "wrap up" a talk. Some homilists could use his services! We make quite a team.

SWEET MEMORIES, published by Centering Corporation, is a hands on crafts book for grieving children, with the gentle assistance of an adult, filled with ways to make things to help them remember and share their special person who died, whether it be grandma or grandpa, mom or dad, sister or brother, best friend, or family pet, using the things they gave them or left behind. Children love crafts. Making any of the craft ideas suggested in the book presents the chance for kids to be creative, inventive, wacky, loving, and sentimental.

Talking about their loved one as they are designing their craft opens doors to healing, sharing memories and nostalgic times, and reliving precious moments.

Sharing their creative masterpieces with other family members, especially their parents, provides intimate, quality time focusing on the loss, providing

necessary, vital communication for the family.

Creating these craft ideas provides an outlet for the child's emotions, while teaching the child the value of remembering in subtle manner. Sensitive, caring adults are made, not born.

SWEET MEMORIES is a wonderful lesson in caring and sharing and so special for young grieving hearts. It is a paperback in a handy children's size, available through local bookstores; \$3.95, plus shipping. You can order the book through Centering Corporation, 1531 N. Saddle Creek Road, Omaha, NE 68104

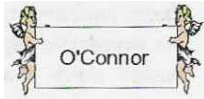
Phone: (402)-553-1200

Fax: (402)-553-0507

Email: jl200@aol.com

All royalties go to the: Peggy and Denis O'Connor Scholarship Fund University of Dayton, Dayton, OH 45469.

Peggy and Denis' Symbols are angels.



Doug Gilvin (3-5-64), son of Gene And Jean Gilvin died of a brain tumor, 2-10-95. The following articles appeared in the Gilvin's local newspapers.

Relay helps fight cancer, Family participated in memory of son.

Jean Gilvin has a very simple reason as to why she walks in the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life each year. Her son, Douglas, died of brain cancer in 1995. "That's why I do this, to keep his memory alive," said Gilvin.

She does more than honor her son, though. Through active participation, Gilvin and her family raised \$12,588.07 for last year's relay.

Gilvin walks in the event to keep other parents from going through the tremendous pain she suffered through. "There's no pain any worse than losing a child," said Gilvin, tears welling in her eyes.

"I'm trying to help others conquer cancer. If I could help on parent keep from losing a child, it's worth it.

The Gilvin family's battle with cancer began in May of 1992 when Douglas, her youngest child, was having dizzy spells.

He was in the front of the family's house when he has a seizure, said Gilvin. HE was rushed to the hospital, where doctors told the family they had nothing to worry about.

The doctor, who at first said Douglas was healthy, had to change his mind the next day when the patient was diagnosed with brain cancer, Gilvin said.

When she received the news of her son's illness, Gilvin said she became numb. "It's very hard to know your son is getting ready to die," said Gilvin.

Lexington doctors said Douglas' cancer was inoperable, but the Gilvin's wouldn't give up. They called hospitals across the country looking for treatment, winding up at the National Institute of Health in Bethesda, Maryland.

Early treatment on Douglas' tumor gave the family false hopes, said Gilvin. "We really thought it was going to work for about a year, but it crept back up on him."

Even when cancer seemed to hit her son the hardest, Gilvin said the family didn't stop encouraging him. "We were all brave around him because he was brave himself. He tried to kick the cancer."

When it became obvious that a cure wasn't in sight, Douglas found other ways to bear cancer said Gilvin. He began walking in the 1994 Rely for Life, raising \$2000.

"He walked in the Relay and that's why I'm doing it in his memory," said Gilvin. "He never complained."

Gilvin believes so strongly in the work of the Relay that she's schedules an upcoming back surgery around this summer's event. "I'm going to be there in June," said Gilvin.

Bad back and all, Gilvin will be walking around the track, raising money for cancer research and for her son's memory. "I feel like I'm doing it for him."

Doug's symbols are a police man and a German shepherd.



Don't forget about J.I.M.'s Picnic, June 5, 1999. We are truly

honored that Kathy Jo Gutsell will be playing her harp. It will be a healing time for each of us.

The speaker this year will be Margaret Foley, who will graduate from law school the weekend before the picnic, to become a Literary Lawyer. She has been the editor of Rosemary's book. Margaret has come to know and love our children through her reading of Rosemary's book.

Rosemary will bring 8x10 pictures of all the paintings from her book. We are truly a special group of people who will be bonded to each other for life. How we wish we had never had a reason for meeting each other, but we are comforted by knowing that we truly understand each other's grief.

Please remember Jim and I as we observe the 8th anniversary of Young Jim's death, May 20.

Lucia Bayne sent the following:

YOU KNOW YOU ARE A CHOCOLATE LOVER WHEN YOU:

Put chocolate milk on your Cocoa Pebbles

Invite friends over for drinks and serve chocolate milk

Take your car in for service and ask for Mr. Goodbar

Don't laugh after a joke .. instead you get the "Snickers"

Celebrate George Washington's birthday with chocolate covered cherries

Enroll in an astronomy class to study the Milky Way

Consider yourself one of the Three Musketeers

Request chocolate syrup rather than maple syrup for your pancakes

Stutter when you are saying the alphabet...

"L, M&M,O,P, ... "



