
LAMENTATIONS

Issue 96

middle

December, 2005

Some of you I know personally, some of you I "know of," and some of you I feel I "should know," simply because we have been listed together as the November People in the newsletter for so many years. I am drawn in spirit to those of you whose "day" is the same as mine, NOV. 6.

My husband Arlen and I have been November People for 14 years now. On that first Nov. 6, the day of Tony's death early in the morning, I went out and picked roses beneath Tony's bedroom window. Because Tony had been sick for so long with a malignant brain tumor, and because he, and we, had suffered so much, there was a definite feeling of relief that it was finally "over."

By the first anniversary of his death, the feelings of relief and peace had disappeared, replaced by the most "God-awful sadness and actual physical hurting one could ever bear. Slowly, each Nov. 6 got a little better. For many years we could tell you what we did on Nov. 6, two years after Tony's death, five years after Tony's death. The first few years we took off work and just "got the heck out of here." We would go anywhere.

As the years passed and our little trips became less healing, we found we preferred to just stay home and perhaps eat out that day. For the last couple of years or so we haven't even gone out to eat, but just go about our "business as usual," except for the fact, of course, that it isn't "business as usual" at all. I do not believe that day will ever be a usual day. I have found it important and even helpful, to always mention to Tony's little brother (who was born after Tony died) that this is the day of his brother's death. This year we observed the anniversary by doing basically nothing. Both Arlen and I remarked to each other that we felt sad and empty. There were no tears, no expressions of terrible sadness - just emptiness. Yet, because I was exhausted the day after, I know it was an emotionally draining day!

Our friend Pat sent her usual "thoughts," which she had done every year since Tony's death. Now that relatives say nothing, Pat's expression of remembrance has become even more important to us. Somehow it's nice to know someone outside our immediate family remembers!

Soon it will be December, and we November People will have made it through another November, another year. For some it may have been easier this year and for others harder. Some of you remember all the details and swear you'll never forget a single thing. But time does have a way of dulling the pain, of blunting the edges, of softening the memories. Now, 14 years after that first significant Nov. 6, Tony's illness and death seem so long ago - so far distant we could easily wonder if it ever happened, if he ever was. Yet, we don't ever want it to become just another year, yes we do know it did happen - and yes, he was. He was OUR son - the child of our flesh and love. It was not a dream, nor his illness and death a bad nightmare. It was real, as is evidenced by the fact that everything we think and do in life is colored, is influenced, by Tony, his life and his death. I'd like to believe we are better parents, better friends, better people, because at one time there was a little boy named Tony who was a part of our lives.

If you are a new November Person, or December, or any month-of-the-year person, I'd like for you to know that it does get easier. Perhaps in time you, too, will be able to remember without all the pain and hurt - with only an "empty" feeling on that date. It will never be just another day, though! Why? Because we don't ever want it to become just another day, for that would mean we had forgotten that child who was such an important part of our lives. We don't want to forget we will always be November People and why!

Darrie Diamond TCF Springfield MO

Tony was diagnosed at age 3 with a malignant brain tumor and died at age 6 1/2.

~lovingly lifted from Troy MI November 2001 Newsletter

Every day, families receive the heart-breaking news that a loved one has died. As we each face this season of "celebration" may we pray the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi that Mother Teresa and her missionaries prayed each day. A portion of that prayer reads:

Lord make me an instrument of Your peace,

Where there is hatred let me sow love,
Where there is injury; pardon
Where there is doubt; faith
Where there is despair; hope
Where there is darkness; light
Where there is sadness; joy.

Grief Grafts

Bill & Brenda Rogers' granddaughter, Jessica (10-17-01), died from SIDS, 1-28-02.

Bill and Brenda have become very involved in helping others in memory of Jessica. You can read more about them on the webpage under Window of Hope that Bill designed and made.

The following article was written about Bill Rogers and the Window of Hope:

The Harrodsburg Herald
October 13, 2005

Window Dedicated To Those Who Have Lost Children

By Debbie Jenkins Cook
Herald Staff Writer

“One of the biggest problems grieving parents have is that others don't know how to approach them, and rather than say the wrong thing, they say nothing-- and parents want to talk about their child,” Bill Rogers says.

A retired IBM employee who lives with his wife, Brenda, at 2139 Cornishville Road, Rogers knows first hand what it is like to lose a child. His daughter and son-in-law, Lynette and Michael Lawson of London, lost their three-month-old daughter, Jessica, to SIDS in 2002.

Before she died, Rogers had read “The Christmas Box,” and “The Christmas Box Miracle” by Richard Paul Evans. “After thinking about these books and grieving parents, I had an idea of how I might be able to help

these people in my own small way. I would make them a stained glass angel to hang in their home to remind them of their lost angel. I thought about the concept for a long time,” Rogers said.

In the meantime, on Oct. 17, 2001, Jessica was born. Her sudden death three months later left Rogers trying to make sense of the tragedy and looking for a way to turn it into something positive. He and his wife implemented a flower delivery ministry to the local nursing home and extended care unit at the local hospital by asking funeral homes to ask families if they would like to donate some flowers rather than taking them all to the cemetery.

The Rogers pick up the flowers, remove them from the funeral arrangements and make bouquets to deliver. To date, they have delivered 1400 bouquets as part of “Jessica’s Angel Ministry.” “We tell them the flowers are from Angel Jessica and it gives us a chance to keep her memory alive -- some ask about Jessica,” Rogers said.

However, Rogers’ largest undertaking was a stained glass window made for the fine arts building at Cumberland College. The work was a way for his earlier vision to become a reality. He and his family became involved in yearly conferences held at the college for parents who had lost children. It was an opportunity for the parents to talk about their children.

Rogers was asked if he would be willing to make a stained glass angel for those attending the conference. Not quite wanting to accept an assignment that large (up to 300 people had attended the previous conferences), he suggested a large stained glass window to compliment the Children of the Dome angel designs in the college’s fine arts center. He created a design for the window that would have a large center panel containing The Angel of Hope. Around the angel would be 12 panels, each memorializing a child or others who have died. Parents were invited to select a design for their child that would be meaningful to them. Modest proceeds from the sale of the panes helped offset costs of the conference and pay for the stained glass, and Rogers donated 904 hours over a period of two years to make the window. He became acquainted with the parents of the children represented in the window and invited them to share memories of their children in a book he has written about the window.

“The Window of Hope has been a true labor of love for me. I believe it is the fulfillment of my vision and my need to create angels to help grieving parents. The sad irony in my journey is that I never dreamed when I first had the idea to help grieving parents, that the parents I would help the most would be my daughter and my son-in-law,” Rogers said.

He chose symbols of hope to use on the window and said he believes there was some divine intervention when some parents would suggest a particular design or symbol he wanted to use in the window without knowing his thoughts. His desire was to design the 13 panels to appear as one window even though the 12 smaller panels would be different in their content.

Hope symbols in the window include a rainbow, spring flowers, butterflies, John 3:16, a cross, star, a heart with a musical note inside (a symbol for Mattie Stephanek's "Heartsongs," poems written about hope), a candle, dove, and red shoes which represent the shoes in the book, "Hannah's Gift" by Maria Housden, which tells the story of Hannah's fight against cancer and a pair of red Mary Jane shoes that helped her through difficult days.

Other symbols in the windows were requested by parents to represent something special to their child or something to honor their child. The 13th child honored on the window, Erica Shi Richie, was a friend of the Rogers and died after Rogers had completed his window, so he placed her name, "Shi" within the tails of the ascending butterflies in the large panel of the window.

The window was installed in May and dedicated in June. The children honored on the window, their birth and death dates, parents' names and address and the cause of death of the child are:

€ John Arthur Foss, 1965-1993, son of Artie and Eleanor Foss of Rumson, NJ, died from bladder cancer.

€ Drew, 1974-1992, and Jeremiah, 1977-1992, Smith, sons of Luther and Rosemary Smith of Beattyville, died in an automobile accident.

€ Kristina Jill Partin, 1977-1999, daughter of Rita Partin of Corbin, died of a drug overdose.

€ Ryan Lamont Sargent, 1984-2002, son of Betty Sargent of Hampton, VA, died in an automobile accident.

€ Doug Barte, 1972-1995, son of Pam Heitzman of Moraine, OH, died in an automobile accident.

€ Jim Taylor II, 1972-1991, son of Jim and Dinah Taylor of Williamsburg, died in an automobile accident.

€ Anne Calvin Hutchison, 1967-1996, and Paxton Scott Haake, May 1996-June 1996, daughter and grandson of Cecil and Jolene Hutchinson of Danville, died in an automobile accident.

€ Jessica Bryn Lawson, 2001-2002, daughter of Michael and Lynette Lawson of London and granddaughter of Bill and Brenda Rogers of Mercer County, died at three months old from SIDS.

€ Lisa Gale Rains, 1973-2001, daughter of Lester and Rita Canada of Williamsburg, killed by a drunk driver while she was standing in her yard. She was pregnant.

€ Christopher Michael Jackson, 1982-2002, son of Guy and Debbie Jackson of Versailles, killed in an automobile accident.

€ Tina Allison Mayne, 1972-1996, daughter of Garry and Rosemary Mayne of Corbin, died from spina bifida.

€ Justin Ratliff, 1981-2000, son of Debbie Garber of Beaver Creek, OH, died in an automobile accident.

€ Erica Shi Ritchey, 1989-2005, daughter of Carol Scott of Georgetown, died in an automobile accident.

Jessica's symbols are an angel and a penny.

Anne Byrnes' son, Jimmy (3-22-67), was killed in an auto accident, 11-10-84.

Anne and her husband, Kevin, were the couple that brought our first earth and performed the first earth ceremony for us.

It's been quite a while since we last "spoke", but I'm so glad you sent the updated newsletter and website. My, how far you've come! I remember "Lamentations" being typed!

The picture of the participants in J.I.M.'s picnic speaks for itself. How much healing has been done in Jim's memory? When I look back at what I've done I feel that way too.

I am starting to get back into (volunteer) bereavement counseling and finding it very fulfilling again. I know I needed time and space to grieve for my husband but now feel I'm able handling to listen to others' pain. It gives me structure and purpose again.

Anyway, hope all is well... everything is going well here. My daughter & her husband are buying my house and extending out. I will have an apartment downstairs, which works out well for the three of us. I didn't want to leave my neighborhood but felt the upkeep of the house was too much.

In February, 2004, Kevin (Anne's husband) passed. When I received the first email from Anne, I asked her if she would talk about the difference between Jimmy's death and Kevin's.

I'd love for you to share my e-mail address to the readers of Lamentations... I would be glad to offer any assistance I could. I still feel a special kinship with bereaved parents, even if it is 21 years today (thanks SO MUCH for your card. It always comes at the right time)

I think the main difference between the death of my son and the death of my husband is first of all, when you lose a child there's nothing worse (perhaps losing another child or in your case your only ..). That being said, Kevin's death was easier than Jimmy's. When Jimmy was killed, I was shattered. I didn't think I could or would live through the pain. I was in horrible emotional pain for many years. Although I did overcome (?) the pain enough -- or perhaps I was mentally and emotionally healthy enough -- to look for help and comfort in others who had gone through the same experience and lived. I needed to see others who had gone through it and lived. I needed to "borrow" their courage until mine returned. That worked for me.

With Kevin's death, I think because of my previous experience of living through Jimmy's death, I knew I would live through this. That's not to diminish the pain of losing my husband of 39 years; my best friend, high school sweetheart and the boy I took to my high school prom. It definitely was different though. I still found that I needed support from others who had become widowed, but I didn't "need" it as much as I did when Jimmy died.

While I could identify with any parent who had lost a child I found it hard to identify with older and younger widows. I think I'm in that in-between age.. I'm not 70 and surely not 40 ...and there seem to be older and younger widows than middle aged. I had gone to a support group and the two other widows were 75-80 and 30ish.

Bottom line: if you live through your child's death... you can live thru ANYTHING.

As for my bereavement counseling, I have volunteered in my church and am seeing a couple whose son died in August. This is the first time I've done counseling since Kevin died and I feel ready. I know I am effective with this couple and while not "fixing their pain" I am journeying with them and letting them "borrow" my courage until theirs comes back. I still believe we all help each other.

If you have any questions, drop me a line & I'd be glad to answer them for you. You are wonderful Dinah... it's amazing how God has graced us in our pain. I know you're effective and the wonderful things you've done

have eased the suffering of many, many people. It's wonderful to be able to see the hand of God in what we do.

Take care...

Love, Anne

EZRIDER38@aol.com

Jimmy's symbols are a hammer and screw driver.

Gerry & Shirley Dixon's son, Ben (10-24-88), was killed in a go-cart accident, 11-14-99.

In reading Shirley's email, it again reminds me that we all experience multiple deaths. My husband's mother died, 11-90, Young Jim died, 5-91, my father died, 12-92, and my mother, 9-93. I also had two cousins my age die within that period of time. It seemed that deaths in my family would never end...and I was right, they don't end, but somehow we become more accepting of death, I guess because we have experienced the greatest loss. I would like to have your thoughts on this.

Shirley wrote:

If I had to pick a symbol for him it would definitely be a basketball and the #24. He had just joined the 5th grade basketball team right before we lost him. They had already received their uniforms and his was #24. I remember he tried it on so many times and could not wait for his first game. That first game was the day after his funeral.... Sorry to go off on that, just a little down right now. We just had Ben's birthday last Monday and yesterday I found out my cousin was murdered in Chicago this weekend. It is definitely an emotional time for me. What is so extra tough is his Mom, my Aunt Elsie, just lost her husband only 2 months ago. Plus two weeks from today will be Ben's Heaven Day. Just too much in such a short amount of time.

The family would love for you to get to know Ben through his webpage: <http://www.geocities.com/dixon61999>

Ben's symbol is a basketball and the #24.

Herchel & Shirley Michks' son, Loyde (12-26-59), was murdered, 5-5-02.

Shirley shared her new “purpose” in life:

Sorry for not writing sooner and thanking you for a wonderful weekend in June. We had left the group we were in, due to the negativeness of the group. Knowing this, the Chrismans invited us to join them at your conference. It really saved our year and helped us think in a more positive way. We do not know who killed Loyde and we are now going thru the justice system, so it was hard to always listen to court proceedings and parole hearings and what needed to be done with each of these subjects. We just wanted to know where we could be used of the Lord since we had this tragedy come into our lives.

*Well, don't pray for something unless you mean it. We are reading **Purpose Driven Life** and really, we didn't have purpose as of yet, or feel we were using Loyde's tragedy to God's glory. One of the chapters focused on when tragedy comes into your life you should use that as a purpose and see what God can do. Well I prayed that eve that God would show me what I can do. The next day a friend from our other organization called and told me the prison near us wanted someone to speak to the prisoners on what it does to Moms and Dads when their children are killed by someone's hands. Boy was I nervous, but knew I had prayed for it. I wrote my words down and was ready to go. When I started to speak I forgot what I had written, but the words rolled out anyway. I was shocked at what I had just finished doing, but was proud that I could tell the prisoners about making better choices. I spoke for 45 minutes at a maximum security prison. I received a card a week later with all the prisoners saying something about how they didn't realize what damage they did to parents for they didn't really care, but I made them think, one person encouraged me to keep talking to the prisoners. The prisoners take classes; this is a voluntary class.*

I have another opportunity to speak to parolees in a couple of weeks. For now, I feel it is important to let others know how it hurts to lose a child. If I can change just one person's mind and get them to think before they act, I will be glad I did this.

I have met two people that have lost children; one because of a car wreck and one 3 yrs old due to Leukemia. I am trying to give them encouragement as I see or call them.

Well, that is what I am doing with my life.

As for the holidays, Loyde always handed out the presents after Herchel read the Bible. Now we have each family (3) hand out their own presents, one family at a time.

Loyde's birthday is the 26th of Dec. He would always want his presents on Christmas night, so now we buy presents for him and give them to someone we feel would appreciate them. One year I bought a Tony Stewart Championship Cap (NASCAR Racer). This was the year Loyde died. I gave it to his dad because they always went to the races together and Tony was Loyde's favorite racer.


Instead of a tree in the house all season, for we do not have children at home, we buy a potted tree from the nursery, leave it on the porch till Christmas, bring the tree in, we put ornaments on that we make in Loyde's memory thru the year, have Christmas, plant the tree in the front yard during that day, we make peanut butter pine cones and put them on the tree for the birds.

Loyde's symbol is an eagle.

Joe & Jackie Beams' son, Aaron (8-26-91), and daughter, Carrie (3-31-84) were killed in an auto accident, 2-26-02.

Jackie proves that you don't have to have money to get things done in your child's memory... as I have often said, it is amazing what you can get if you ask:

I wanted to tell you what has been going on. The last memorial we had for our children was a balloon lift-off at our memorial tree. We had no place to really set or place our refreshments, and I told one lady about wishing we had a Gazebo? I ran with my idea and went to a man named "Little" Walt he runs a funeral home, and that is where I had taken my children. Well, I went to him about the idea. He had to go talk to some other people and it took a while, but he got it done.

So now we have our Gazebo. It's not a big one, but it is there and I am proud of it. I couldn't afford it myself, but in my heart I knew it was for my children .

November 12, we dedicated it to our children, and TCF of Green County. Now we have a place to sit and do whatever♥. Our 3rd Candlelight Service was held at our tree and now we will have our next one at our Gazebo.

You are right, every little thing we do, we do for our children, big or small♥

Fellow traveler

Mother of Carrie-Aaron now and always

Jackie

Aaron's symbols are a teddy bear, tractor, baseball, hunting & fishing, angel and a rose. Carrie's symbols are a smiley face, nurse, frog and an angel.

Wesley & Carolyn Looker's daughter, Debbie Webb (1-21-65), was killed in an auto accident, 1-21-01.

Some of you may be facing the same problems with "in-law situations" as the Lookers, if so, I hope you will share. You will help other parents.

Dinah,

Just a line to bring you up to date on our family. Our daughter, Debbie, was killed in an auto accident nearly 5 years ago, and now our son-in-law is being deployed to Iraq just before Christmas this year. Please pray for the 2 children (Tia 18 and Tim 15) who have never been away from their father during the holidays. They live next door to us and we will be here for them, but they have a step-mother now, so we can only go so far on things. It is a different ball game now.

Thank You,

Carolyn

Debbie's symbols are a teddy bear and a teacup.

Al & Sandy Hickey's son, Paul (1-1-73), died in an auto accident, 11-21-99.

Sandy is Director of Human Resources at Georgetown Community Hospital in Georgetown, Kentucky. She is a living kidney donor and is the

mother of an organ donor. She has written and spoken widely on behalf of organ donation efforts. She serves on the State Board of Directors for Kentucky Organ Donor Affiliates (KODA) and on KODA's Donor Family Council.

I am doing great with only one kidney. And my recipient is doing well also.

For the past year, I've been serving on an Institute to Medicine Committee (IOM) in Washington, DC. It's been much more demanding than I originally thought. I was asked to represent Donor Families on the committee. It was intimidating at first - On the committee are doctors, lawyers, ethicist, economist, nurses, transplant surgeons, nephrologists, and ME. They all have so many letters after their names; it looks like alphabet soup :)

Our commission is to write recommendations for legislation regarding "ways to increase organ donation." So the fact that I'm a living donor (as well as a donor mom) - I'm sure played a major role in my selection. Anyway, it's quite an honor and lots of hard work. I have been well received and use every opportunity to tell them about Paul.

Thanks for all you do for us fellow travelers. God bless.....

Paul's symbol is a white butterfly.

Rich & Melody's son, Brian (12-18-96), died from being hit by a car, 10-31-99.

This is Brian's story:

On Halloween night, 1999, our 14-year-old daughter was babysitting. She'd been hired to supervise half a dozen to 15 kids every Sunday night while their parents' small group met upstairs in a private home. She had tried splitting the job with another sitter; however, as she usually ended up doing most of the work, she didn't like having to split the money. Since she is responsible, very observant, and was accustomed to supervising groups of kids, it didn't cross our minds at the time that we were putting her and the other children in danger.

On this particular night, Dr. and Mrs. ----, who host the group, thought it best to meet at our church instead of their home, so they wouldn't

constantly be interrupted by trick-or-treaters ringing their doorbell. This was not Rich's and my regular small group, but we decided to sit in that night, particularly to help our seven-year-old avoid "temptation," as she had mounted a month-long campaign to get her dad and me to let her go trick-or-treating that year. We don't celebrate this holiday, so we thought our church would be the best place to get her mind off it. We also figured that our eleven-year-old, who was already an experienced babysitter, could help her big sister with the extra kids.

We were meeting in the room right next door to the "kid room." The families who had the youngest kids did not attend that evening, so we didn't feel we were putting any undue pressure on our girls. Including her brother and two sisters, our eldest was overseeing nine children that evening. Three of them, including one of her sisters, were past eleven years of age and well-behaved; our middle girl was already babysitting for other families. We reasoned the older ones could help with the younger ones if needed.

About a quarter to eight in the evening Dr. ---- was wrapping up the study. We had just finished praying when our 14-year-old appeared at the door to ask if Brian was with us. I thought, "Oh, brother, he's escaped." Now Brian was not quite three and still in the throes of "the terrible-twos." He liked to go-go-go, so I wasn't surprised or terribly concerned, just mildly annoyed. I figured he had to be somewhere inside the building.

Our youth pastor, Pastor G----had been at the door behind our daughter. His high school youth group was meeting downstairs. There wasn't enough time for me to wonder why he was there until he stopped me at the top of the stairs. Then, out of earshot of our teen-age daughter, in a forced voice that sounded like a sigh, his words came: "Melody, Brian's been hit by a car." (Someone had come from outside and told him. Pastor G. Had run out to the highway to see for himself, and he recognized Brian.)

As I called for Rich, who was still in the room, I knew it had to be serious, because our church is situated on a busy highway. I repeated Pastor G----'s words, and Rich shouted them back to Dr. ----. Both men flew past me on the stairs. As I caught up with the doctor by the outside door, he turned. Dr. ---- pointed his finger in my face and said emphatically, "Don't come!"

Don't come? Right! That was MY SON out there! But then the thought came: our girls are still upstairs! They must have overheard!

I ran back up to a chaotic scene. At first it seemed that people were just milling aimlessly about the hall, but there was our teenage daughter sobbing and sobbing in one of the mom's arms. I remember thinking to

myself, "This is a church--why aren't they all praying?" But at that time the adults were just in the process of hearing and trying to digest the news.

So with urgency I said, "Come on, we're going to pray!" I remember praying out loud, but I don't remember my exact words--something to the effect "We don't know what's out there, Lord, but it's all in your hands."

I spied my other two girls run out from the room toward me in the hall, and I finished my prayer with my arms around both of them. Then I moved over to the mom who was holding my eldest as she sobbed, put my arms around both of them, and prayed for my teenager--that, whatever had happened, she would not blame herself. Then I remember announcing to no one in particular, "Well, it's time to go and see what's out there,"

I turned and headed back toward the stairs. This time I had to do it without the initial adrenaline rush. I remember consciously forcing my legs to move down the stairs in the direction of the door. When I opened it, the scream of sirens met my ears. As I strode kitty-corner across the parking lot toward the conglomerate of flashing lights that looked like a small city, I felt like I was in a dream. What to pray, what to pray? I could hear Rich's wailing over the din. I finally began to pray the only words that would come: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us!" Nothing else would come to my mind, so I prayed the "Jesus Prayer" over and over.

I got about two-thirds of the way to the highway when I felt my knees go weak and start to buckle. At that moment a strong hand gripped my arm. I looked up to see our friend, who works as a prison guard. He had been in our meeting. "Lean on me," he said. I clutched his arm as he walked me the rest of the way to the highway.

In the road near the median was Brian, sprawled on his back, unconscious, surrounded by a semi-circle of emergency personnel. Dr. --- was kneeling there, at Brian's head, shouting orders to the EMTs. Amid the throng of onlookers Rich was pacing, crying, "Oh, my God! My son, my son!" and alternately collapsing in the long arms of M---, a tower of a man and a dear friend. M--- assists Pastor G. with the high school youth group. Later that night M--- and his dear wife brought our daughters--and our dog--into their home.

I just continued praying the Jesus Prayer. I remember thinking, "Oh, the poor people driving the car that hit him! What must they be going through?" I scanned all the faces, but I couldn't tell. I couldn't think of how to ask, "Who hit him?" without someone mistaking my motive. So I turned my attention again to Brian, who was lying face up in the road, his eyes closed. The only part of him I could reach were his little feet. They were bare (his little shoes had been knocked off by the blow) and still slightly

warm--no colder than when he would kick the covers off at night. Yet I sensed something missing. As I massaged the bottoms of his feet with my thumbs, I called his name loudly over and over--I had to be loud in order to be heard over the cacophony of sirens, wailing and shouting.

I felt someone grip my shoulders from behind and try to lift me to my feet. "Ma'am,--" It was an EMT-- "you come stand over here." He thinks I'm hysterical, I thought to myself, so I said, "I was just thinking that if he could hear my voice, he might come back to us." I'd always heard that the sense of hearing is the last to go. The EMT didn't seem to hear me, so I just went on with my Jesus Prayer. Then suddenly I heard him say, "Ma'am!" I realized he was talking to me. "Ma'am, you just keep calling to him." So I started to call out Brian's name again. But then I thought, "I wonder which 'Him' he means?" So I went back to my Jesus Prayer.

The time came to move Brian to the ambulance. I shouted, "Don't let Rich drive!" Rich climbed right in the back of the ambulance with Brian, Dr. ---- and the EMT's.

I looked up and there was our youth pastor's wife, "Melody, is there anything I can do?" I said, "Yes, please stay with ---- (my oldest daughter)." She turned and immediately headed back to the church. I found out later that she stayed by my daughter's side the entire evening, even after they moved to our friend's house.

When I tried to get into the ambulance, there wasn't room in the back with Brian. I was told to ride up front with the driver. He was an older man, very calm and professional. He would talk to the EMT's in the back via radio, telling them when we were about to go over railroad tracks, what intersections we were coming to, etc. I prayed the Jesus Prayer out loud, the whole way.

We arrived at the hospital and pulled up under the emergency room portico. As I leaned up against the brick wall, watching them unload Brian and whisk him inside, the driver came over to me. "Ma'am, is there anything I can do for you?" "Are you a praying man?" I asked. He replied, "I've been known to be." "Then, would you please pray for whoever it was who hit my son? I'm worried about him. (I don't know why I said 'him'.) And for my daughter." "I sure will, ma'am."

At the front desk I was met by a nurse with a clipboard. She began to ask me, in a voice that for some reason really annoyed me, questions about Brian: his full name, birth date--from which she deduced he was 34 months old--social security number, etc., etc. I think I must have snapped at her, because I can remember apologizing. Then Rich, followed by M---, burst out

of the ER, grabbed my hand and shouted back to M---, "We're going to the chapel!"

We ran together down to the small hospital chapel, which was darkened, lit only by red candles and dim red indirect lighting behind the altar and the giant crucifix behind it. There we threw ourselves down at the rail and prayed. Rich begged God for Brian's life, but I could only manage to continue praying, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us!"

It was there in that dim red light that all the Bible verses I had ever learned came back to my mind verbatim--and I suddenly knew what they meant! For instance, I had never before understood II Corinthians 12: 9-10, when the Lord said to St. Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Then a picture, or vision--the first of many that night--formed in my head: On my left I could see an enormous dark ball that weighed tons and tons. It was so heavy that it sank lower and lower, and I felt it pulling me down with it. But on my right was a ball of light. Its weight was equal to that of the heavy dark ball on my left. It slowly began to pull the other ball back up; as if two huge balls of equal weight were on a set of scales. The bright ball did not do anything to change the size, heaviness or darkness of the other ball. It simply was equal to it in weight and size. And it was because they balanced that I could survive--no--exist.

About that time I turned to Rich and said, "Do you remember when we gave Brian to God?" I meant his dedication ceremony at church. Rich nodded, but he was thinking of the prayer he prayed aloud moments after Brian was born. From then on our prayers changed. We told the Lord we knew that Brian belongs to Him, and we gave Brian back to Him again.

Then Rich wanted to see what was happening with Brian. I wanted another minute there at the altar. I was slowly realizing that, whether Brian lived or died, our lives would never be the same. I had seen Brian lying in the street. His belly was distended, and although I'm no medical whiz, even I knew that meant he had internal injuries. I was acutely aware that, even if Brian survived, we were looking at a lifetime of caring for intense needs. But I wanted God to know that that was all right with me. I knew what I wanted--any Brian was better than no Brian--but I truly did not know what would be best. I would leave the choice with God. Being able to do that, I believe, was part of His answer to my Jesus Prayer--God was having mercy on us!

When I got up, I noticed that Rich was talking to a nun in the back of the chapel. She asked what had happened, and as Rich told her, she just hurt with us. Sister offered no promises, no platitudes, no Bible verses (As an

evangelical Christian, that was what I expected.) She simply shared our pain.

Just then in burst my two close friends. B---, the church secretary, had gotten the news right away to start the prayer chain. She told us she had reached our senior pastor on his cell phone, and that he was on his way. As we left the chapel, I looked back to see the old nun on her knees, down by the altar, praying.

Out in the hall M--- was waiting for us. He told us a specialist from a nearby city had been called in. I said, "Then he's still alive?" but M--- said, "Now, I didn't say that."

Just then I spotted a couple from church coming down the hall. I knew why they had come: they had lost a son in an accident recently. I didn't take it as a bad omen. I was just touched that they had come.

A woman came and introduced herself as the hospital chaplain. She showed us to a small room with a telephone and some chairs. It was too soon to notify family, as they all live far away, but I wanted to call my friend D----- who lives in town. I only wanted her to pray, but she insisted she was coming down to the hospital. Then we all sat down to wait.

There was no time for conversation. I looked up and saw Dr. ----'s face at the door, and I knew. As the other doctor appeared, we sprang up. Dr.---- choked on his words: "I'm so sorry, Melody and Rich, but Brian didn't make it..." I heard a loud cry and suddenly everyone in the room was weeping. Dr. ---- broke down saying, "I'm so sorry...I tried...I'm so sorry..." I heard myself say, "No, no, you did everything--everything..." He cried and cried on my shoulder. Rich confirmed what I was saying by thanking Dr. for all he had done. Then, as Rich and I held each other, we turned to thank the ER doctor, who stood, gray and expressionless. I later learned that, several years before, his car had struck and killed a toddler. He was reliving a nightmare that night, poor man.

We wanted to see Brian right away. With permission, we flew to the ER. I didn't notice who was in the waiting room or if anyone followed us. They let Rich and me go into the emergency room alone. Only one nurse was there. We saw Brian, lying there as if asleep, his face all bruised, and at first we cried. We asked the nurse if we could hold him. She helped us disconnect the tubes.

Rich wanted to hold Brian first. After a few minutes he let me hold him. He looked and felt like Brian; he was even still warm. I remember it was very quiet in that room. Then D---- the nurse spoke up. She wanted us to know that everyone had done everything they could for Brian. "We know," I

told her, "from how long they worked on him." "We just didn't want to give up," she said.

Nobody rushed us. We held Brian for an hour, using this time to say "Goodbye" and work up the courage to put him down. I am SO glad we had that time!

I remember looking up and seeing our senior pastor. He didn't know what to say. It was all so surreal. When I saw him, I remembered his sermon. Just that morning he had preached about St. Peter walking on the water to Jesus. Then the thought came: "Melody, He's asking you to get out of the boat!" Later we learned that Pastor and his family had been in another town bowling with a family from the church. Both Pastor and Mr. H--- happened to part of the accountability group that met weekly in our home, along with M--- and Rich! Later we heard that when the news came on pastor's cell phone, one of them dropped their bowling ball mid-swing as both families dashed to their cars!

Dr. ---- came in to answer our questions about the driver: he was a sixty-one-year-old man. He was sober and had not been speeding. He was used to driving that part of the highway which, except for the lights of the Taco Bell restaurant on his right, is very dark at night. He later told us he had seen nothing, just heard a light thump, as if something had fallen out of the sky. But something told him to turn around and drive back and see what he had hit. He never even imagined it could have been a person. "How awful," I said to Dr. ----, "to go all those years with a perfect driving record, and now this happens!" (I don't know how I knew he had a perfect driving record, but it turned out to be true.)

The chaplain appeared at the door to tell us that the waiting room was literally filled with people from our church. Could one of us go out and say something to them? We didn't want to leave Brian, but we told her to tell anyone who wanted to was welcome to come in and see us. Our friends came in groups of two or three at a time. They just loved us and hurt with us.

One of them, K----, put her nose up to my nose and said, "Just look into the face of Jesus, and don't take your eyes off His eyes." That was the best advice I could have gotten, and I took it. I was being asked to get out of the boat. There were huge waves on all sides, in the form of fear, dread and horror as it began to sink in what the loss of Brian would mean to our family. I had to constantly look back into the face of Jesus.

My friend B---, the church secretary, sat next to me. She asked if she could get me anything, and I realized I was thirsty. That copious thirst stayed with me for weeks. I couldn't get enough water, but I couldn't eat.

Once I looked up to see the nurse, who had seemed so calm, weeping in the arms of my friend J---

People came and went so silently. I would feel a hand on my shoulder, look up, and there would be another face: first it was D-----, my Catholic friend; she told me later that, sitting there holding Brian, I reminded her of Michelangelo's La Pieta. (I can identify with Jesus' Mother Mary in a way I never could before; and Rich says he can identify with God the Father: now we know first-hand how it feels to lose our firstborn sons.)

The entire H----- family came in. I was awed that their children wanted to come. They were the family who had been bowling with the pastor's family. And God placed them all there for Rich in his hour of need! We look back now and see how God had been preparing us for this all along. Later people would tell me they could feel the presence of the Holy Spirit in the room when they entered. I could definitely feel it, but I was surprised that I was not the only one.

M--- had already gone back home and had broken the news to his family--and our girls. (That was not how we would have wanted our girls to get the news of their brother's death, but that's how it happened.) M--- phoned us at the hospital, and we spoke to each of our daughters, with me still holding Brian. God allowed me to speak calmly and answer all their anxious questions. I asked each girl if they wanted to come see Brian. Our two older girls said no, they just couldn't, but our seven-year-old wanted to see him. So Rich left the hospital to go get her.

*Meanwhile I wanted to wrap Brian up in the blanket a little better, so I put him back down on the table. I noticed he didn't look quite as good as he had when I'd first picked him up. His eyes would no longer stay closed. Dr. --- and B--- came in and urged me not to let **our** girls see him that night. I told them I wanted it to be their own decision. My reasoning was: I didn't want them to have regrets later, as I had, when, as an eight-year-old, when I was not allowed to attend my own grandfather's services. For years afterward I could not accept the fact that he was really dead. I would see someone from behind and say, "Look, it's Grandpa!" So when our youngest arrived, I went out to see her in the waiting room. I told her Brian had lots of bruises; she could either see Brian now, or in a couple of days when the funeral home "had cleaned him up a little." She chose to wait. (I did not realize at the time that this was confusing to her and she did not fully grasp the concept that Brian was dead. She would not be able to accept this fact until months later.)*

Rich and I went back in the room to take our final leave. We were met by the county coroner, who gently explained about the autopsy. To me that

seemed unnecessary. I asked the coroner, "Why do we need one of those? Can't you just look at him and tell why he died?" He told us that the answers we got from the autopsy could prove comforting in the days ahead, so we believed him. He turned out to be right.

Rich and I each held Brian one more time. Then we laid him carefully on the table. We prayed the Lord's Prayer over him and told him "good-bye for now;" we told him we would come to him later. I opened and closed his eyes (which would no longer stay shut) and kissed every part of his body, from his head to his toes. As we left the room I turned back for one more look. It was final.

We were met outside the room by hospital personnel. We thanked them, and D----, the nurse I had seen crying, told me, "I just have to tell you what a great mother you are!" I said, "This isn't me, it's God. The real me will kick in sometime later."

Just outside the door a man introduced himself and gave me his card. He told me he was from County Health Services and told me to feel free to call him day or night. He also told us he had come to the hospital from a different reason, not expecting to run into us. He had just come from counseling the driver of the car that had hit Brian!

Mr. H----- drove us in his van to M---'s house to get our two other daughters and our dog, whom they had also taken in. We took a phone call there from Rich's dad in Arizona. Rich had phoned both our parents from the hospital. The person I had least wanted to tell was Rich's dad. He and Brian were very close. When Brian was born, Dad cried. Brian was THE HEIR--the one to carry on the family name. I had always felt I had to keep Brian safe especially for Dad's sake. I told him I was so sorry. Dad said he knew that, and he was just worried about us.

Mr. H----- drove what remained of our family to our home; Pastor drove with M--- in our van. Both Pastor and M--- camped out for the night on our family room sofas. They came complete with sleeping bags, and even a thermos of coffee for the morning!

Before retiring to bed, our teen-age daughter broke down and said, "Mom, I'm so sorry!" I held her and we cried, "It wasn't your fault, honey. No one blames you. It could have happened to anyone. He used to get away from me, too." We cried together for several minutes.

That was by far the most painful night of our lives up to that point. I was afraid to go to sleep because I might wake up thinking Brian was still here, only to come to the awful realization that he is not. I didn't think I could stand that if it happened, but, mercifully, it never has. I've never

forgotten in my sleep what happened. I always know. I believe that is another way the Lord has answered my Jesus prayer.

In the morning I cried hard for the first time. M--- had left for work, but Pastor stayed with us the whole day. M---'s wife, arrived with her friend S---, also from church. These women, which my parents nicknamed "angels," basically took over our home. They arranged for meals and took care of all the details of caring for us and the myriad of persons who came in and out of our home for the next three days--which have become a blur. I was so impressed with our girls' friends. So many came to the house that day, several from the high school, which is walking distance from our home. The high school had called in counselors, and kids were allowed to just leave campus if they felt they needed to, no questions asked.

After we finished Brian's funeral arrangements, Pastor told us that the man who hit Brian with his car wanted to meet with us to apologize. I couldn't believe it--I had wanted so badly to meet him to let him know we didn't hold any grudge! So we met Mr. ----- at Pastor's house the morning of the visitation. He was in a car parked across the street. When we arrived, he, the county health department counselor, and Dr. ---- got out of the car. I felt sorry for him as we watched him walk up the driveway, but I was so proud of my husband. He met the man half-way and put his arms around him. I went down and did the same, and we walked into the house together.

There Mr. ----- told us his story. He never even saw Brian, who came from the darkened side of the road. Apparently Brian was too short to be seen over the hood of his vehicle! He did hear a slight thud, but even after he drove back and saw the road blocked off and people leaning over a body he never actually saw Brian. When the first policeman arrived at the scene, Mr. ----- went over and told him, "I think I may have been involved in this." The policeman told him to get into the squad car, and he watched everything from there.

We told Mr. ----- we thought that took character, and thanked him for coming back both times. We said we knew of hundreds of people who were praying for him including our whole church. Mr. ----- seemed kind of stunned. He told us that if he were Rich, he would give him a punch in the nose! He asked what he could do for us. Rich told Mr. ----- that the best thing he could do was follow the Lord all his remaining days, and we would be satisfied. Pastor reiterated by saying the best tribute he could pay our son was to give his heart to Jesus. I could hear the counselor sobbing. Yet it was not an awkward situation. I remember thinking how unusual it was to have something I was involved in go so well! (Later we learned that M---'s wife had everyone at our house praying for us the whole time.)

There's more to tell, but this is more than enough for now! I'm sorry—I didn't intend to go this long. I've never revisited this on paper, so this has been therapeutic for me. The message above is what I wrote to a pastor-friend who asked about the details of Brian's passing shortly after it happened. It is the only time I have written everything out.

***Spring 2002.** Two and a half years have passed. By the grace of God we are still married. Grief has taken its toll, but Rich and I are actually closer now. Last November they tore down the hospital building where Brian was pronounced dead, including the chapel where we prayed. I went back just before and collected a few souvenirs, including a brick fragment and a discarded otoscope cone from the emergency room. The large crucifix hangs in the new hospital chapel, where I can go to see it anytime.*

In conclusion, God is still good, more than I ever knew. It was He who prompted me to pray the way I did that night, because only He knew for sure that Brian was already gone and a resurrection was not to be--not that night anyway. He has showered us with his grace and mercies, all of which I can't even begin to tell you.

***Spring 2008.** Brian would have been eleven. Rich and I are still married--28 years and counting. Our youngest daughter is in high school. Our middle girl was valedictorian of her high school class, and is a college freshman. Our oldest was married last summer to a wonderful guy, so we have a son again. Life goes on. Mr -----, the man who accidentally ran over Brian, still sends us a card every anniversary of Brian's heavenly birthday, every Christmas and every Easter. We learned that he had been sober, driving slightly under the speed limit, as was on his way home from his last visit with his dying father, when he encountered Brian in the road.*

Our road of grief was hard, but I look back now with no regrets. Would we have even had Brian if we knew? Of course! We truly look forward to the [Day](#) we are reunited with Brian and Jesus Christ. Then nothing will ever separate us again.

I don't know how Brian's story would help anyone, but several people have told us that it already has, so that's why I continue to share it.

Melody explains Brian's symbol:

*My symbol for him is a **horse**. There is a mare nursing a foal carved on his gravestone. Brian was an equestrian. He took riding lessons with his sisters since he was 18 months old. His first word wasn't "mama" or "dada." It was "horse." I picture him in heaven riding bareback, leaning forward on the horse's neck as they streak across the horizon.*

David & Barbara Ellis' daughter, Allisia (12-23-65), was murdered, 10-5-03.

Barbara shares her pain:

Dear Dinah,

Thank you so much for your caring cards, and information you have sent me over the last two years. It has helped me deal with what has been almost impossible for me. It is still a day by day situation for me and my family.

It has been so hard for me to talk about. That is the reason I have not written to you before now.

It is hard for me to talk about what happened to Allisia, because God didn't take her from us, an evil, uncaring man that she was trying to get away from took her from us. He beat her to death, then threw her out of his truck and ran over her. When I buried her, she had choke marks on her neck, her face was black and blue and just about every bone in her body was broken. I could see the pain in her almost unrecognizable face.

Then we had to go through a court system that let a man like this take an Alford Plea (that he wasn't guilty but there was enough evidence to convict him). He got five years because the court felt that because he came from such a prominent family, and his aging parents needed him so badly to keep their farms running, that the Commonwealth Attorney let him plea and the Judge gave him "shock probation". He is now out of prison and doing his same old thing. While we are left to agonize over why or how something like this could happen in a country like we thought we lived in. You see we didn't live in that country. His family had connections with just about all the people in the court system in the town in one way or another.

Every attorney I went to, told me what was taking place in the court, but said they couldn't do me any good in Marion County, that they went by their own laws there, whatever that meant.

Now, about Allisia, she was my baby. She had four children, two girls and two boys. She was a sweet person, always smiling even when she had nothing to smile about. She never asked much for herself. Allisia came from an upper-middle class family, she always felt like she had been blessed to have had the life she had growing up. Even as a small child, she would share what she had with people that had less than she had; even giving away her clothes and that of her sisters.

There were over eight hundred people at her wake, most of them with a story of her generosity to them. No one was ever too rich or too poor for Allisia's company. Her life was shared with people from all walks of life. But, she was that person that nothing ever seemed to go right in her life. She had several failed relationships. The last one of four years took her life. She was the child that I always said I wanted to take care of me when I got old and sick. This was because she was always so kind and caring to me.

Now I am sick, I am slowly dying from a broken heart, and I can't seem to control it. I have had to have surgery on my heart twice in the two years since my beloved daughter was murdered.

Barbara Ellis

Sherry Smith's son, Bo Upton (10-11-83), was murdered with his friend Ryan Shangraw, 2-1-02.

Sherry has been very active in trying to find the people who killed her son:

I am Sherry Smith, Bo Upton's Mom. Bo was my only child. He and Ryan Shangraw were brutally murdered on February 1, 2002. Bo was only 18 years old. He was a senior in high school with a 3.85 GPA.

He was a left-handed baseball pitcher and had several scholarship offers for college. He had strived hard to reach his goals of a scholarship. He was loved by all who knew him. Ryan was only 20 and was the Shangraws only son.

Since the detectives have not solved this case, I believe it is due to budget cuts, resulting in not enough hours being spent on the case by the state police. Much evidence has been found. I am trying everything to bring in leads. I miss my son; my life will never be the same.

Here are some of the things I have done as I am searching for answers and looking for justice.

- *A website with a spot for anonymous tips: www.boryan.cjb.net*
- *After campaign (trying to get help from congressmen, senators, the governor, etc.)*
- *Many attempts to get help from "America's Most Wanted"*
- *\$12,000 reward money*
- *A huge billboard on Highway 27 in Stanford offering the reward money for any information*

- *A National Prayer Chain (Prayer letters sent to at least 5 churches per state in all 50 states)*

The following article was written by Sherry to the editor of the paper:

Dear Editor,

It has been three years since mine and Harold's son, Bo Upton and Rick and Margie's son, Ryan Shangraw, were brutally murdered. Three years and still no answers to why their lives were so tragically taken from us. No answers to who could have committed such a violent act, and yet they found guns, bandannas and had two witnesses.

Imagine how it feels that it's not been solved. This would have already been solved (in my opinion), if they would allow enough hours per week on the case to Det. Monte Owens.

I think about Bo every minute of the day and miss him more than words can ever begin to say. Life is difficult to adjust to not having Bo here and I know Harold and the Shangraws feel the same way.

My emotions are so hard to control and my heart is saturated with pain from the empty void in my life. My emotions of grief are deep inside, layer upon layer as I go through life's journey without my son. Bo is my first thought when I wake up, in my thoughts all day, and is my last thought when I go to sleep.

Our sons are our heroes as they have faced death before us and were resurrected up to heaven and are already with 'God. Now none of us fear death as we long for the day when we get to see them again and meet Jesus face to face as they have done. I thank God every day for His son, Jesus, and for making a way for us to live on through believing in Him.

My mind wonders as to what Bo is doing in Heaven and what Heaven is like. I think of how cruel this was that murderers took my son's life (and Ryan's). My only comfort and my strength comes from God. I am constantly in touch with anyone who will talk to me at the police post and am non-stop at doing things to hopefully bring in leads.

I believe that Detective Monte Owens will solve this as long as I keep my faith and pray with a believing heart that justice will be served. My hope opens the door to God's healing for my heart, to God's purpose of my pain, to God's word for answers to my questions and to God's peace in the midst of my storm.

Can you imagine coming face to face with the cold, cruel, heartless person that murdered your child? I believe God is preparing us for this and that it will be solved. I pray that at least one of these murderers will find

Jesus and the love that only God can give, and will come forward with the information.

I pray that God burdens their heart so heavy that they will confess, serve their time and make peace with God. They have caused intense emotional suffering, the community has 4 cold-blooded murderers living in it and I fear that this will happen again if something is not done about it.

Why do we even have a justice system if it's not to lock up murderers? I wonder what kind of mothers and fathers have raised their children to be murderers, to have no conscience and can keep on living, laughing, eating, and sleeping as if nothing ever happened? You know their parents had to notice a difference in their behavior when this first happened and what could covering for them possibly prove to their sons about the importance of their eternal life when they die?

Instead of a house full of teens—ballgames and all the other fun things that came along with having a son, I write in a journal, fight back with the so called justice system, pray for strength, pray for this to be solved, work, write and sing songs in Bo's memory, read the Bible, read books about how you survive if your child has been murdered, do things on holidays in Bo's memory to ease the pain—like helping others such as my tradition has changed from a family Christmas, to taking coats/blankets and toys on Christmas Eve to the many homeless people in Louisville. And I tell myself every day that I am wearing Bo's smile and I put on the biggest one I can to be a Christian witness of how God will help you if you ask Him to. Please, if you know anything about this case, call me at 606-305-4795 or Detective Owens at 1-800-222-5555.

Sherry wrote this poem:

*Bo, my hear aches to see you, I close my eyes and see your smile,
But God says I'll have to wait awhile.
I've been through the valley of weeping, of sorrow and of pain
But the God of all comfort was with me at hand to uphold and sustain.
Sometime in the coming years it might be when I get to that better land
I'll read the meaning of my tears and then, I'll understand.
It's not time that heals, you never get over losing a child,
It's not something you get through, but it's God' He teaches you to blend it
into your life and it is a part of you.
Your life was tragically taken now this lonely journey I must endure
But I know that you live on in Heaven and that's a peace that's pure.*

Love,

Mom

Bo's symbol is a baseball.

Sherry Becker's daughter, Leanne Lynch (10-10-78), died from leukemia, 9-15-97.

Sherry told me about the organization Daybyday and Monthbymonth and I asked her for the information:

The address of the list owner for Daybyday and Monthbymonth is Liz Edwards at stocktrdenbabe@aol.com. DBD is a group for those who have recently lost a child who had cancer and MBM is for those of us farther out. If anyone writes to Liz she will tell them exactly how to join. These two groups have helped me a great deal as have you!

Leanne's symbol is a horse.

Anita Harris Dunavant's son, Davey Dunavant (3-31-92), was crushed by a falling tree, 6-28-01.

Thanksgiving is a time to give thanks of course.... I didn't look forward to ANY holidays from the middle of 2001 until now.... I am going to share with you.... I have learned in the past 3 years that you will eventually have to stand up and face reality at one time or another in your life. You can't go through life holding a grudge, nor can you sit and think about trying to change the past, because it'll never happen.

So this year, yes I will start to celebrate Thanksgiving, Christmas, and all the other holidays to come.....I have a lot to be Thankful for, and one major thing is that:

I want to Thank God, for bringing a wonderful man into my life, to teach me, how life should be lived.... JOE COOPER....

Some of you may know that back in 2001, I was addicted to Lortab 10's.... I couldn't live without them.... I was trying to deal with Davey's death. I took it hard, because I was blaming myself; I thought I had failed as a mother and a parent. I had to go through all of it alone... without the help at that time, of my husband....but with the grace of God; he brought Joe into my life and helped me deal with it. He to this day stands by my side, and

watches me cry sometimes. He helps me with it, and not make fun of me, like I was made fun of before.....

So now, just so all of you know..... I know I can't bring Davey back, but I can start a new life.... And be a new person, because I know there are family members and friends that I have out there, that care.....If none of you cared, you wouldn't talk to me, like you do....and keep in touch with me....Please don't be a stranger, email me any time.... Thanks to you all for being there, to listen, to talk or just to "be stupid" with me...LOL.....

Love to you all.....Davey wouldn't want me to be like this anymore, so here is a toast to a new start.....

Love you all,

HAVE A WONDERFUL THANKSGIVING, I will, being with Joe and his family....

Always,

Anita

wildcat0927@hotmail.com

Davey's symbol is an angel.

Carroll Helm's son, Lucas (12-25-82), was killed in an auto accident, 2-4-03.

Carroll teaches at Cumberland and he shares his precious son, Lucas, with us:

Lucas Edward Helm
12-25-82 to 02-04-03

Lucas Edward Helm was born on Christmas day, 1982. Lucas was 2 weeks late according to the calculations by the obstetricians. As a result had aspirated muconium, a tar-like substance which coats the lungs and limits the exchange of oxygen. He had to stay in the hospital for an extra two weeks. During that time, the doctors had to put a tube directly in his heart and would inject medication through a needle in the vein in his tiny left leg. After much prayer by many churches in our community, Lucas made a remarkable recovery, and was able to come home.

Lucas was the most beautiful child I had ever seen! He had big brown eyes and hair that was thick and dark. The joy he brought us was extraordinary. As he grew, he became even more beautiful and started to

exhibit his love for the outdoors. I can remember taking him fishing and having to change his diaper on the bank. Late at night when he would wake up he would call, "mommy, come and lay down with me." It sounded like a little song, "mommy, come and laaaay downnnn with meeeee." When he was asked why he wanted us to come and lay down with him, he would say, "but mommie, I'm just a little boy!"

As Lucas grew he became even more of an outdoor person. He rarely spent time indoors, and when he did, it was usually raining outside, and he was building a fort out of cushions and blankets inside.

When Lucas's sister was born, she became as feminine as Lucas was masculine. Lucas, however, had Lydia doing all the things he liked to do outside. When Lucas was in the 6th grade, he wanted to be black. He started wearing do-rags and would pull one pants leg up to the knee. He even developed a neat swagger. When Lucas had a do-rag on his head, his sister Lydia had to have one on also. Quite honestly, they looked really cute together with their do-rags on their heads, their arms crossed, and their heads in a cocky position!

Did I say Lucas was very independent? He was!! It was always a chore trying to convince Lucas of anything. He seemed to know things from osmosis rather than learning them the normal way. He learned everything about the outdoors including the names of trees, the infinite variety of ducks, the migration patterns of Canadian geese and best ways to catch large-mouth bass. Lucas and I fished in many bass tournaments. We started out with a 14' Stott Craft boat with a 35 HP motor, but later had to have an 18' Stratus with a 250 hp Mercury outboard. Lucas said we had to be able to keep up with the big boys!

Lucas didn't do anything he liked in the normal way. He became almost obsessed with anything new until he mastered it. He liked hockey so we had to get him the right kinds of skates (Nike Pro) and all the equipment. Additionally, since there was no ice in our town, we traveled to Knoxville. Ice time was hard to get so we ended up watching his games at 11:00 p.m. or 6:00 a.m. As usual, he became good at it, then lost interest in it after about two years.

After hockey it was bull riding. We did not live on a farm but Lucas found a friend who had a farm and he wanted to live with them. He worked for his friend's dad hauling hay, cleaning stalls and anything else he could do around the farm. As time went on, he had to have Wrangler jeans, Rocky boots and big belt buckles. Lucas would watch all the bull riding programs on television. From that he created his own mechanical bull with a large barrel and ropes to shake it. Once, he and his friends had the barrel tied to

trees in the fence row. Little did they know that it was in a place covered with poison oak. All of Lucas's friends got poison oak, but Lucas didn't get a speck of it. That was another thing about Lucas. He was a leader. His friends were all boys older than him, but he would organize them and have them doing all kinds of things according to the way he wanted them done. He was a leader in every thing he attempted.

I loved fishing and wasn't much of a hunter, but Lucas loved hunting. His grandparents had several acres of land on Cherokee Lake so he had a good place to hunt turkey and deer. He once told me that he really thought that if he was dropped off in the woods, he could survive quite well. Once we went deer hunting after an unsuccessful turkey season. We always went into the woods before day-break. One morning while Lucas was in his tree stand, and the sun started to rise, we looked up and a very large flock of wild turkey were roosting in his tree and several others around us. Go figure! Lucas turned to me, smiled and just shook his head.

On one particular occasion while coming up the lake as the sun was going down, we saw a remarkable sight. Lucas was driving the boat, as he always did, when he slowed the boat and finally shut the engine off. To our West was the biggest, most beautiful sunset we had ever seen. The sun was like a huge, orange ball and it was sitting on the lake. The reflection created its double on the face of the water. We sat there in silence for many minutes when Lucas said, "is that beautiful or what?"

One day Lucas came in and asked me this question. "Guess what I'm going to do tonight?" "I don't know," I replied. "I'm going coon hunting with some friends." "They have a super coon hunting dog, and we are going to watch it tree a coon." That was the beginning of another great passion for Lucas; "coon hunting." Naturally, Lucas could not do it without being completely immersed in the sport. He bought a dog that had the name, "two face." It was an English, white with red spots, but its face was completely red on one side of its face and white on the other, hence, "two face." That is one of my great regrets in life is that I never did go coon hunting with Lucas. He asked that I go with him a couple of times and once right before his death. I wish I had, but now I will never have the chance.

The last thing that Lucas developed a passion for was singing. He always had a good voice and we noticed early that he could carry a good tune. That means he could stay on key when he would sing the songs he liked. As a result of this talent, he became the lead singer in a small Christian band called Ictus. Ictus is the symbol for the Christian fish. I'm still contemplating getting a tattoo of Ictus put on my shoulder with Lucas' signature, as it was on his drivers' license, in the center of the fish. It

happened one night while he was on the way home from a late night session with the band. It was rainy and windy that night and as Lucas attempted to turn off the interstate, he apparently overran the exit, corrected and flipped the truck. According to the officers, the truck rolled several times, throwing Lucas from the truck. He was not wearing a seatbelt.

I'm not trying to say that Lucas did not ever get into trouble. Lucas was a handful! There was a neighbor who did not like for the boys in the community to get in their yard. As a result, Lucas and some boys were caught peeing on the neighbor's bushes! There were many other occasions where the boys got in trouble for a number of things and he really hated having to go to the neighbors and apologize.

There is not a day when I don't think of Lucas. I love him very much. As most parents who read this know, there is a hole in my heart that can't be filled. It has been very difficult writing these few things about Lucas's life. Lucas lived life at such a pace it seemed that he had to live his whole life in 20 years. I thank God for the 20 years I had with him. He made me proud just being himself. He had a charm about him that made him very popular with the girls. At the funeral, at least 10 girls came by who said that she was Lucas' girlfriend. I'm sure they were all his girlfriends.

Lucas sat out a year after high school and did many of the things that he loved. I'm glad he did. At the time of his death he was attending Walters State Community College. He planned on transferring to the University of Tennessee where he was to become a Tennessee Wildlife Resource Officer.

There are many things in life I do not understand. Why does a young man of 20 years of age have to die when it seems his whole life is ahead? I have no answer but, by faith, I know God knows the answer. It is hard for us to accept something like this being the best thing for Lucas, but God doesn't make mistakes and he knows what is best for us and our children. Besides Lucas, I have two other beautiful children and one beautiful grandchild. Zachary Dean Helm was born September 04, 2005.

Why do these things happen? God knows. One observation I must share is that Lucas wanted to be an organ donor. He wanted to help others in case something ever happened to him. Well, the people who came to "harvest" the organs said that Lucas had a bleeding vein in his left leg, and severe buildup of plaque in the heart and severe scarring inside his heart. God doesn't make mistakes. We almost lost Lucas at birth, but God gave us 20 wonderful years to enjoy him. We enjoyed him, and my thoughts of him now are all about the wonderful things he did, his boundless energy, his charm, and his incredible love for life.

Isaiah chapter 57, versus 1 and 2 has been extremely helpful to me. It reads: "The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death." I ponder Lucas' death every day, and I know, in my heart, that God spared Lucas from evil, the evil of sickness and pain. He could not have lived as an invalid. That, for Lucas would have been worse than death.

Now I live for a better time as all of you who are reading this. There will be a time when there will be no sickness or death. Any of us would have given our very lives for our child. Why not now, give the very life that's left in us as a memorial to our lost love one? God has been my comfort, and no other person on the face of the earth could have done so. By the grace of God I intend on giving my all in life in honor of my son and his death. I want to be sure that I will see him again, and I know I will.

Lucas' symbol is an Icthus (fish- Christian symbol).

Diane Craddock's daughter, Michele Wade (12-31-76), was killed in an auto accident, 5-20-04; her son, JJ Wade (9-22-72), died in an accident, 1-26-04.

Diane has set up a wonderful website where our children can be remembered.

Would you like your loved one to be included in the special event I will be having on December 31st? Let me know thru email or call me at the numbers below, I'll put their name on the list, then mail the picture and special tribute for your loved ones to me by December 15th (PO Box 1035 Franklin Virginia 23851) so I can make arrangements for the correct number of loved ones. You can view the list of names as I receive them on the www.angels-arms.celebration-of.com website.

This is a reminder message to everyone about the special ceremony I am planning for December 31st. It will be okay if anyone wants to email the picture and tribute to me, I will print them out for the memory tables. The reason I wanted them snail mailed is because the picture quality look better than the printout from my printer. There isn't a set length for the tribute, write what your heart feels (a message to your loved one or

about them)...it will be an honor for me to include as many loved ones as possible.

For a current list of names, visit the www.angels-arms.celebration-of.com website. If you have sent me an email and I don't have your loved one listed let me know, include what state you are from (as I am trying to keep a master list by state); and this will be a yearly event, let me know if you want your loved one to be included every year. If you have already sent the picture and tribute, if you have received an email letting you know I received everything...disregard this message. If you're not sure just send me a brief message and I will email you back letting you know if I received the picture and tribute.

Diane Craddock,

Loving Mom of Angels JJ and Michele Wade

"Death leaves a heartache time can not heal..."

...Love leaves a memory no one can steal."

757-562-7727 home & 757-438-7812 cell

Michele's symbols are a Harley and a female angel and JJ's are a Harley and a male angel.

Gail Hendrix's daughter, Bridget (3-29-84), was killed in an auto accident, 11-15-02.

Gail wrote:

I really appreciate you remembering me and my family on the third anniversary of Bridget's accident. The story of the ship was beautiful and I do believe Bridget is safe and happy with other children who have left this world too early.

*I gave her the symbol of a **butterfly**. I know others have that symbol also, but I loved its significance and it truly fit her. I had a butterfly etched into her gravestone between the date of her birth and the date of her death. Actually, it was the emblem of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly.*

Thanks again so much for caring.

Love,
Gail

Jackie Beams' daughter, Carrie (3-31-84), and her son, Aaron (8-26-91) were killed in the same auto accident, 2-26-02.

Jackie has just set up a website for the Central Kentucky Compassionate Friends. She hopes you will take a look.

[url:http://www.geocities.com/tcfofcentralky/compassionate_friends.html](http://www.geocities.com/tcfofcentralky/compassionate_friends.html)

Carrie's symbols are angels, smiley face, frogs, cats and a nurse; Aaron's are angels, a tractor, teddy bear, hunting, baseball and a rose.

Jeff and Lori Hendricks' son, Michael (12-19-85), was killed in an auto accident, 11-10-96.

Lori wrote this letter on Michael's angel date (these feelings are so typical of us all on these days):

Dear Dinah,

I've had a rough day. Three of my brothers called and one held me tight. My Dad called and started crying. My Mom passed 2 years ago.

My husband and I have been working non-stop while raising our 6-year-old daughter. It has been rough. I am ready to go sell seashells on the beach.

I'm exhausted, stressed and depressed about not having Michael in my life. He does answer me in prayers and leaves me pennies in the most unusual places. He collected them.

I know I will be with him again, but no one understands the pain my heart carries. When I picture my heart, it used to be cracked in half, but now I see threads trying to sew it back together. When I see a little 10-year-old boy, my heart melts.

Michael would have been 19 this year, his friends all in college. His girlfriend brought me roses today at work-of course that set me off. She is a wonderful person.

All I want is peace and harmony and love in my life, and I just can't seem to find it.

I have asked our local funeral director to have an angel built in the Linden Cemetery so all parents could go light a candle for their child. He said he would, but it's a big, costly project and he is extremely busy, so I just

put a bug in his ear now and then. Like the Christmas Box Angel. There is one in Plymouth, MI, which is stunning. That is my goal. I can't have gone through this heart-break for nothing; I do want to help others. I have a vision and I want to see it happen if I don't accomplish anything else in life, I want that done.

Thank you for not forgetting about Michael when everyone else has. No one wants their child forgotten.

I know you understand.

Lori Hendricks

Michael's symbol is pennies.

You and your family are in my thoughts and prayers as we face this holy of seasons. May you find peace.

This was sent to me by several parents (hmmmm, I wonder why?). After you click on the website, keep hitting "enter." But, please don't send the email back to me because I know I'm not going to lose any pounds!



DinnerDilemma.pps

Please visit the website and let me know if you see any omissions or errors:

<http://www.cumberlandcollege.edu/lamentations/joininginmemory.html>

dinah@cumberlandcollege.edu