

LAMENTATIONS

Issue 81

M.I.D.D.L.E.

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Written by Carol Sias and dedicated to the parents that will not be spending this Valentine's Day with the children that they have lost.

Tomorrow is Valentine's Day. Universally, it is recognized as a day for lovers to profess their love and to shower their beloved with floral bouquets, sweet confections, and romantic cards strewn with hearts, lovely flowers, and other icons of love. Inside, the recipient will find words of adoration and everlasting commitment.

For parents it is also a special day of love. We lovingly and carefully select a card that befits our child's level of development. We want just the right words on the card as a declaration of how very much we love and treasure our children. We also look for little tokens of love, such as a little Snoopy holding a box of chocolates, small toys as a remembrance, and candy hearts with frivolous and humorous as well as loving messages stamped on them. Those candy hearts carry on a tradition that was begun by our parents.

We shop for little Valentine cards for the young children to sign and take to school, making certain that there are enough so everyone gets one. And, of course, we encourage them to send one to someone they don't want to, using that as a lesson of life to teach compassion and forgiveness for others. When they get home, our children excitedly show us their envelopes (which they have usually decorated with hearts in class before the big day) and all of the Valentines are therein. They tell us about each one. The boys roll their eyes as they present one or more from GIRLS and then smile a shy grin if they get one from a girl they secretly admire from afar. The girls openly giggle and gush as they show us the ones they receive from BOYS, vowing always to keep them forever.

As parents, we treasure each card or little gift our children give to us. When our children are little, we are presented with many pieces of paper with attempts at making a heart. On those same cards, are unrecognizable letters that we know say, "I love you Mommy and I love you Daddy." Later, when they are better able to write, cut and paste, the Valentines become more elaborate. Often there are red hearts made of construction paper pasted to white paper doilies. Many of the hearts will have arrows through them. On the cards somewhere, they again, write, "I love you SO much, Mommy" and "I love you SO much, Daddy." Little girls say that when they grow up they want to marry their daddy, and little boys say that they want to marry their mommies when they grow up. In later years the Mommy and Daddy turn to Mom and Dad. Then come the store-bought cards and tokens to show that they love us, such as three dimensional flexible plastic hearts with poseable arms and legs, and on them are written things like, "I love you," or "Be Mine" or they will give us cute little stuffed animals with a Valentine theme. When they grow into their pre-teen and teenage years, they may ask their parents to go with them to pick out a gift for their latest crush.

For parents whose children have died, this and every day are so much different. Instead of Cupid's arrows, the arrows that pierce our hearts represent longing, despair, agony, and a painful sadness beyond description. Every heart we see in every store, flower shop, and other place of business or pleasure, reminds us that ours are broken. Broken beyond repair and forever for the child or children that we have lost.

For those of us who have lost our children before they have a chance to come into this world, viable, soft, pink, and tiny, theirs are thoughts of and visions of what could have been and what could have been done differently, so that these children would not have been lost to us before they had a chance to develop and be born. Those are the children that we will never hold, nurture, nurse and watch grow. All we have are our lost hopes, dreams, and boxes of blankets and tiny new pieces of a layette that will never be used. We may have a brightly colored mobile that we had gotten with tiny little red hearts that would move as the music box played its lullaby.

For those of us who have lost our children at a young age, we look at the scribbles that represented hearts, and those great big unrecognizable letters, made by tiny hands with chubby little fingers. And although we have been able to hold and watch these children grow to this point, the light of their futures goes out like a lamp in the night.

For those of us who have lost our children old enough to have learned to make hearts, and write those endearing sweet messages of love on this day, we sit in their rooms clutching their doll, stuffed animals, or other favorite toy, as we rock and cry and grieve for our children and the teen years they will never see, the dances they will never dance, the sports they will never participate in, and the pain of our loss keeps us from thinking at the time of a future beyond that time.

For those of us who have lost our children in their teenage years, we sit on the floor or on the bed, as we go through a chest, closet, box or a drawer filled with mementos and belongings that are the diaries of their lives. Each thing that we read, touch, smell, or hold reminds us of an event, time, or occasion that makes up our memories and reminds us that all we have left, besides our never ending love, are these memories of a life that has been taken away from us too soon. And as we find ourselves looking at all of the symbols of romantic love in the stores, displayed with hearts, cupids, and heart shaped candy boxes wrapped in satin or red cellophane, we think of the children they will never have. And we think of the Valentines they will never receive from those children who will never be a part of a future that has been taken away.

For those of us that have lost our children after they have grown and have love interests and families of their own, we think not only of the child we have here no longer, but also of the family that they have left behind. We think of the Valentine's they will never give or receive from their precious children, to be cherished and saved in a special place for the rest of their lives, as we have done.

On this Valentine's day, we hope and pray for just some semblance of comfort and a hope that some of the pain of the arrows that pierce our hearts can be lessened for this day. As

we picture the caricature of the drawn heart with jagged edges where it has broken in two, our hand goes to ours and we think of it now as only a mechanical part of our body, that with each beat, reminds us of how very much we miss our children. For at any age, our children will forever be our Valentines as we think of them in the arms of the angels in the Heavens above...

In Memory of our children Jonathon, who never had a chance to have a life, and Greg (9-27-77), whose life tragically and suddenly ended in an auto accident a month and six days after his 20th birthday, November 05-1997.

Greg's symbols are "I Rule," skateboard, yin yang, music, karate and a helping hand.

Christopher (5-7-90), the son of Ron and Maria Faller, died after complications from a piggyback heart transplant 3-24-98.

Little Boy at Play (Christopher's Song)
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Little boy at play
Star wars, Legos and Army toys
Building castles and dreams
Just like all of the other boys

Christopher said that he knew
Good guys always win
But when he lost his fight
Our world came crashing in

(And his mommy cried)
Someday we'll be together again
Someday I just don't know when
Someday when I see the sun shine
I will see your angel face looking back on mine

Christopher your Mommy knows
You are up in heaven
I know you can feel her love
And her love will never end.

Guitar Solo

(And his mommy cried)
Someday we'll be together again

Someday I just don't know when
Someday when I see the sun shine
I will see your angel face looking back on mine
MP3.com - Michael Peace

Christopher's main web site is at Maria's Tribute to Christopher
thank you so much,
Maria
Christopher's mommy forever

Christopher's symbols are 2 linked hearts, beavers, legos and butterflies.

**Debi Ratliff (3-15-60), daughter of Ron and Margie Ratliff, died as a result of lupus
6-2-97.**

Our Debi was the older of two daughters. She was married with two sons when she died
of

Lupus at the age of 36 five years ago. She was my best friend and she and I
had so much in common. I miss her more with each passing day. Her oldest
son is getting married this summer. Those kinds of days are bitter sweet.
This past summer we attended our youngest grandson's high school graduation
and it felt like she just had to be there. I know she was, but I needed to
see her. Her husband has remarried and seeing him with his new wife is also
something very hard for me to handle. I love him and do want him to be happy.

**Michelle (8-24-84), daughter of David and Cindy Jo Greever, was hit by a car while
waiting on her school bus, 11-5-93.**

I have something I wish to share, it is my story excerpted from a book that has been
published by Author CHRISTINA M. MEIDE titled
DO WE KNOW WHEN OUR TIME IS NEAR?

It is available to order at <http://www.1stBooks.com/bookview/14548>
Additionally, it will become available at amazon.com, barnes&noble.com, and
borders.com by next month as these sites only update once a month. It will also become
available to order through 25,000 other worldwide retail bookstores soon.

My story which is included in this book is below:

STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN

CindyJo Greever

In Loving Memory of Michelle Marie Greever

As I reflect upon the last few days before our nine year old daughter Michelle parted suddenly on a beautiful Autumn morning while trying to board her school bus, I find myself being so convicted and comforted of God's promise of eternal life...following are some of the "signs" that Michelle perhaps knew her time was near.

Michelle memorized Bible scripture for six years at Awana, a worldwide youth program held at churches across the globe! One Awana night, just two days before Michelle parted, Michelle had John 10:28-29 signed off in her Awana book as the last two verses she memorized.

Ironically Michelle and I had talked extensively over these last verses we memorized together about eternal life in the last few days of Michelle's earthly life. Michelle told me she knew that when Jesus came back we would get new bodies; she knew that death wasn't permanent because it was just "our shell that perished for now." Michelle explained that if she were to die before me to "look for the brightest star and she would be shining and smiling down on me," and that she "would never leave me," that she would "love me always and we would never have to say good-bye!"

It never will be good-bye for life is eternal as John 10:28-29 states: "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither can any man pluck them out of my Father's hand, the Father who gave them to me is greater than all, and no one shall snatch them out of His hands." Michelle and I memorized these verses together, and it would be her last before she parted.

Little did we know then that two nights later she would be declared brain dead, dying but giving new life and sight to others through organ and cornea donation. Little did we know, but God knew, and He was preparing us unbeknownst to us. Not only did God prepare us that night but He prepared us in other ways in the weeks and days that precipitated this tragedy and in many ways, he prepared us all of Michelle's nine years of life as the conversations we had when another child died were how "God takes little children too." Michelle always had a serene wiser than her years attitude about life and about death. Death never frightened or worried Michelle.

Ten days before Michelle died, she had walked in on her older sister Melissa to find her forlorn at her bedroom window. Michelle asked Melissa what was wrong. Melissa replied that she never wanted to die and was afraid of death. Michelle gave her a big hug and said, "Masissa, you don't have to be afraid to die, I'm not because Jesus will be with me, we aren't alone when we die; Jesus takes us in His arms!"

Michelle nicknamed her older sibling Melissa "Masissa" because it stood for mom and sister! Michelle was very devoted to her sister and family and always had a way of comforting each of us when we were down.

There was all of Michelle's Halloween candy, she had more than ever for what was to be her last Halloween...she gave her daddy all his favorites, mama hers, brother Michael his and said she didn't need it anymore.... the first morning of school after Halloween, Michelle brought the rest of her candy for her friends...

Then there was the last picture Michelle gave to me that she drew with her last letter to me. Michelle gave me this the week before she parted. The picture of a little winged girl standing on a smiling crescent moon. The picture speaks for itself. There is a cross, stars and a sun above the little girl with wings and a vapory trail leading to a staircase above her. Next to it are the words: "Love, you Rove you, Wove you! Have sweet dreams mommy, I just love you so much!" I have named this piece appropriately "The Stairway to Heaven." I also have had completely sweet dreams since Michelle parted.

Michelle and I shared silly bird talk ever since the time we went to the pet shop and a large bird greeted us with "rello!" Our silly bird talk was to be the last words we spoke that morning when Michelle left for school, never to return into my arms again in this life...."Love you, Rove you, Wove you." And these same words were in her Stairway to Heaven drawing to me.... It was never good-bye.

When Michelle died, her Fourth Grade Teacher cleaned out her desk at school and kindly brought us her things. One particular assignment that truly stood out was to write a book and draw about the "Best Trip" ever taken by the student. In 1991 our family went on a 5300-mile trip all along the California coast, down to Mexico and back home to Washington State. Michelle wrote about this trip, but on the cover she drew a picture of a truck by a Dead End sign and the caption coming from the truck was "OH NO!" This was the scene of her death, complete with the road crew's bulldozers that were actually working there at that time. I have always believed Michelle wrote about her best trip ever on earth and then drew her best trip ever to Heaven... it was yet to come and only days later.

These are only a few signs, there were many, many more. This has held such great significance and meaning to me, even more so as time goes by, because I am convinced none of this preparation was coincidental or accidental. I believe God was preparing us unbeknownst to us. I believe God wants this to be my testimony to share with others. It is my hope to comfort others through these experiences and to help lighten others grief and bring their hearts hope. Hope that life truly does go on and we never have to say good-bye, and that we will be together for all time!

It has been nine years now since Michelle parted and I still hurt and miss Michelle more than ever, but I will always be her mother and she will always be my daughter. It is like I once told a friend who didn't understand, "If you were deaf, blind and without touch, would you still love your daughter (who is alive)? Just because I can't see, touch or hear Michelle, I still love her just the same!" To me this is the best way I can describe my love and undying devotion for Michelle. I will always love her. We will be in each other's arms for eternity, one sweet day as we were on earth and it is never good-bye just as Michelle and I spoke at length over her last verses in John 10:28-29!!!

CindyJo Greever ~ Mother to Angel Michelle Marie

1984~1993

Washington

Michelle's website is: www.geocities.com/michellemaries

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

Rob (9-15-79), son of Tim and Connie Dehner, was killed in an auto accident 5-19-99.

I took part of these words from a popular song and made them my own, and now they are yours.

I'm Always There

Looking skyward I whisper,
you have to know I miss you so.
A voice returns soft and low,
I want you to know I'm always there.
I'm the whisper you hear in the wind.
The sun that gently warms your skin.
I'm the brightest star on a clear night.
A shadow following wherever you go.
The warm caress of love you feel.
No matter what road you do choose,
Or where life's journey may take you.
Here I will stay every step of the way.
For as long as there are tomorrow's
Know I am here with all your days.

Tim Dehner

Rob's symbol is a rose.

Jonathan (10-24-85), the son of Greg and June Witty, was killed in an auto accident 6-7-02.

We are having a real hard time with the loss of our son Jonathan. He was our only child. He lost his life on June 7, 2002. He had a tragic car accident that cost him his life; he was in a curve before he could do anything, there was no warning of the curve. Five weeks

after our son's accident the state put up signs around the road. We feel if these signs had been there, he wouldn't have wrecked. You can see the curve now; it's all lit up with sign. There was a passenger in the car, she was not hurt. Jonathan is missed so much, he was a good boy, and everyone loved him. One of his friends told me he was someone everyone looked up to, because he treated everyone the same. He wasn't doing anything wrong, he had his seat belt on, although he had took the harness off of his shoulder. He wasn't speeding, no drugs or alcohol were involved.

We have a lot of anger, we asked why? They told us there were no funds, but they got the funds later, 5 weeks later. Jonathan would have been a junior at Monroe County High School. He was 16 years old his birthday is October 24,1985. He played football, track and was in weight lifting, but his best love was racing his 4-wheeler with his friends. Jonathan has a lot of friends, and his classmates have done a lot in his memory and so have family and a lot of other people. Jonathan was a good boy, he wasn't doing anything wrong, no alcohol or drugs were involved he was not speeding; his accident was so tragic we just can't understand. I question God a lot we both do. His friends have told us Jonathan treated everyone alike. They said he was someone everyone looked up to. He had a good life; he loved his life and enjoyed it.

We miss him so much and everyone else does too. His friends have been good to come by and see us and go to the cemetery. We didn't have Christmas with family, we couldn't, and it didn't seem right to do that now. We went to the cemetery several times, and we got some things and took for our son. I hated buying things like I had to buy. I told Jonathan, "I was sorry we couldn't get things like he wanted like we always did."

Dinah, I wanted to let you know we did come to see the dome and it was beautiful, and we also drove by to see where you lived. You have a beautiful home. I know our homes don't mean as much to us as they did, I know mine doesn't, just all the memories are there our home is the only home our son ever had and he loved his home. We built it and moved in it when he was a baby. My husband and I have been married 27 years. We were married 10 years before we had our son, Jonathan. We have a scholarship Fund set up in memory of Jonathan, to help another child to further their education that will start this year. I can say so much more about my precious son, but I'll send it later.

Jonathan S. Witty Scholarship Fund

Deposit Bank Of Monroe County
320 N.Main Street

Tompkinsville, KY 42167

Jonathan's symbols are a rainbow, star and a 4-wheeler. He loved to ride more than anything.

Kaitlyn (7-20-00), the daughter of Donnell Scott, died as a result of a cancerous brain tumor

3-24-02. Donnell shares her frustrations:

I am going to try and come to the picnic, not sure how things will be going at that time, but I would love to be able to join everyone. Maybe there I won't feel so much like an outsider as I do in my everyday life. I can feel a person looking at me like that is the girl whose baby died from cancer. When I tell people about her they look at me so sad and apologize. I am so sick of the apologizing. Why should they be sorry, I am not. I wish she wouldn't have died, but am I sorry about her, no way. She changed my life forever, and continues to affect other peoples' lives. She was on loan to me and she fulfilled whatever it was she was sent here to do. She is better than I am for she completed her tasks in 20 months and I have been here 21 years and have not done what I was sent to do. I am proud of her and always will be!!

A friend of Donnell's sent this to her:

Bereaved persons are like ducks:

Above the surface . . . looking composed and unruffled.

Below the surface. . . Paddling like crazy!

"I think about how much I miss her,
and start to feel sorry for myself...
but then I think about all the people
who never got the chance to meet her,
and I start to feel sorry for them."

~Author Unknown~

Kaitlyn's birthday is July 20, 2000. Before she died we started collecting teddy bears and angels for her and then started seeing angel teddy bears so I believe that is the best symbol for her. Each time I see one I think of her. Her headstone will be put up this month and on the front it has a Precious Moments angel and a Precious Moments teddy bear.

Kaitlyn's website is: www.caringbridge.org/mo/kaitlynlouise

Jessica Bryn (10-17-01), the daughter of Michael and Lynette Lawson, died as the result of SIDS 1-28-02. Lynette shares Jessica's 1st birthday celebration:

I wanted to thank everyone for the wonderful birthday greetings you sent to us. It tends to make a horrible day a little easier. The day was nice. My parents were down and we had 3 bunches of 6 balloons to release. We included Baby Samuel, Saralinda's son, in all our memorials. He and Jessica shared a birthday and were actually born 1 hour and 20 minutes apart. Anyway, we wrote messages to both of them before we released the balloons. Also, I took poems and a "Letter From Heaven" and we read them and then lit a candle; then my mom read a poem for Jessica she wrote and and lit her candle. It was very hard to read the poems, and my husband had to do some of them, but they were beautiful. Mom then said that we would think she was crazy...she bought Jessica a birthday gift. She had seen a doll that looked just like Jessica. Of all the ones there, it was the only white baby and she was dressed in pink. She put a card on it from them.

Jessica was born at 9:51 p.m. and so at 9:45 I read a devotional and a letter I had written to her...at exactly 9:51 we lit another candle. Now, it is 7:20 p.m. on Sunday and it is still burning. My father gave us a story he had written for us titled "The Little Angel's Special Gift." It is about Jessica's quest of seeing God to ask for a special gift for her mommy and daddy. It goes on about me finding out I was pregnant (on the 6th month anniversary of her death). It is beautiful. He is going to e-mail it to me and when he does I will forward it to everyone.

Like I said, the day turned out nice. Of course, we still miss our precious Jessica dearly and love her even more, but I think we did well celebrating her 1st birthday. Thanks again for the thoughts and prayers.

Jessica's website:

www.pain-heartache-hope.com/stories/jessica.htm

Jessica's symbol is an angel.

Heather (3-21-83), Pam Lager's, daughter died in an auto accident 1-28-01.

My oldest of two daughters, Heather, was six weeks shy of 18 and a freshman in college when she and her best friend were killed in an auto accident on 1/28/01. I continue to struggle to find ways to cope, searching for reading material, people, anything that might help fill the void, as I know you know.

I also began to search for addresses and send cards to the family of any young person I saw in our local obituaries that passed after my loss. Most have made contact back with me, but I have no one close that has experienced this that is a friend who I can call on or talk to, and I so wish there was. I belong to several online groups for parents who have lost a child, and though it helped initially, now it feels more like idle chitchat, there are so many new people in and out. Initially, I went to a couple different support groups, but think I went too soon, I couldn't handle everyone else's pain, and they were all in the

same place I was at the time, so they weren't able to offer me much hope I could survive. I would like to go back to these groups down the road when I feel I can offer that hope to the newly bereaved parents. I feel I really need to do more with this pain, that there is something more to learn or do because of this tragedy in my life.

*My first-born child, my joy, my love,
Given to me from the heavens above.
Why me, I thought, did God choose to so bless,
The answer to this, my mind could only guess.
The unconditional bond of love I instantly felt,
The face of an angel that made my heart melt.*

*Watching you grow over 17 years,
Never knowing my happiness would lead to so many tears.
I thought you would be mine to have all the days of my life;
You not being here cuts through my heart like the pain of a knife.*

*My heart cried out to God "How could you let this happen,
Why did you let her fall asleep,"
My child, he said, was only on loan, and not mine to keep.
"But why after only 17 years did she have to take her last breath?
You could have sent an angel to spare her from this death".*

*He said the answers you seek are all within your reach,
I sent her to show you how to love, and also to teach.
Her mission was accomplished, her work on earth was done,
Take joy and comfort in knowing that you taught her about my son.*

*For now she has eternity with Jesus in the place of your dreams,
She isn't truly gone from you, that's only how it seems.
She is never far from you; you are never really apart,
When you feel she is not with you, just look inside your heart.*

*For there is where the memories and love are stored until for you I send,
You see, you also believe in my son, likewise for you there will be no end.
For in my word I've promised you will be together again one day,
It's only love you will keep, all the pain and tears I will wipe away.*

Written for you my angel, with love, Mom

*"You can shed tears that she is gone,
or you can smile because she has lived.*

You can close your eyes and pray that she'll come back,
or you can open your eyes and see all she's left.

Your heart can be empty because you can't see her,
or you can be full of love you shared.

You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday,
or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.

You can remember her and only that she's gone,
or you can cherish her memory and let it live on.

You can cry and close your mind,
be empty and turn your back,
or you can do what she'd want,
Smile, open your eyes love and go on.

You can read these poem along with Heather's story if you visit her memorial website:

<http://www.geocities.com/regalmap/index.html>

Jason Robinson (12-4-79), son of Sam and Kathy Caudill, died in an auto accident 5-30-94.

Thank you so much for the wonderful weekend. That sentence does not express the depth of my appreciation. Since I have spent the last 8 years NOT dealing with my grief, the weekend left me happy, sad, angry, and exhausted. It's just what I needed to realize that I must face this reality of loss and actively work at coming to terms with it. I want to share two things that happened on the weekend that let me see again how God loves and cares for me. First, Friday evening as we left the campus, I was feeling very emotional and I silently asked God to give me something to encourage me. When we got to Shoney's to eat, I was going through my bag of "goodies" and pulled out a fan. I was stunned. One of my son Jason's favorite things was collecting fans. I found it strange at the time because it's usually girls that like those kinds of things. But Jason loved everything and appreciated art and beauty. So, I was so happy to find a reminder from God of Jason. However, when I opened the fan and saw the bright yellow smiley face, I sobbed. You see, the other symbol for Jason is a smile, because that's what everyone remembered about him. Even as he lay in his casket, he had a half smile. When I asked if the funeral director arranged that, he said they never do that. It was just one of God's ways of reminding me that Jason was not far away.

The second thing that happened was Saturday evening at the end of the weekend. My husband, Sam, was getting a CD and I was looking over the "freebie" table. I had already picked up some "sprinkles" and something else, but nothing big. I didn't want to choose

the large things because others might want them. So, as I scanned the table, which was pretty much cleared, I saw that there was a banner left. As I remember, there were only two on the table on Friday. I picked up the package and wondered what the banner's picture was, but the package was sealed and I started to put it back. Then I looked at the tag at the end of the package and knew God had saved it for me that whole weekend. Jason's symbol that I had stamped on his brick was a tennis racket. The banner was two tennis rackets and balls. I hung it on my back porch and can see it from my kitchen and dining room. God truly does care about the small things in our lives.

I am committed now to beginning my journaling and writing Jason's story. Thank you for your support, encouragement, and prayers. I am looking forward to next year's gathering. God bless you both. Take care of yourselves.

Jason's symbol is a tennis racket.

Ricky Jr. (8-26-90) and Caroline (6-26-92), the children of Ricky and Ellen Lone, were both killed in a house fire 4-18-00. Ellen wrote the following poem:

I Wonder
I always think of you, never forgetting that I know
you loved me,
but I sometimes wonder, do you think I could
have saved you.
Do you look down at us and wonder what happen
to us that night.
Did you wonder that night, why I couldn't get to you?
I wonder if you know?
I wonder if you knew what was happening.
I wonder if you know I wanted to be with you.
I wonder what you would have looked like now.
I wonder if you would have been tall.
I wonder if you know, that I know you're in a better
place, and that you're safe.
I wonder if you know that I miss every inch of your face.
I wonder if you know that I think of you every
minute of the day.
I wonder if you know that I will always love you
in my own very special way.
I love you and you will always be with me.

Ricky Jr's symbol is a baseball and Caroline's symbol is an angel.

David Leon McLaughlin (4-13-85), son of Lee Ann Lofton, died from leukemia 4-21-01.

Our Beloved child, David, oh how me and your Dad, Hamlet and Darius miss you so much!!!! The day I released you and told you that you could go, was the hardest task that I could ever do! But my sweet baby, you were ready to go, you wanted to be with Our Lord and Savior. The Lord prepared me for that day, if it wasn't for the Lord, mama couldn't have let you go! Thank You Jesus, for putting David in our care, and for allowing us to love him, and for all the great times we had together. For us it was Better to have known and Loved him than not to have known him at all. David was "A special child of God." He loved the Lord and he was saved. David had, AML Leukemia, but he never complained, no matter how much pain he was in. He loved people and he loved life and all his family and friends. We didn't have a lot of material things to give our boys, but we had a lot love and we had the Lord. Even though David had a short life here on earth, he was truly happy and blessed. He loved school, basketball, wrestling, football, all kinds of sports; he always did his best at whatever he did. He loved music and he enjoyed dancing and making you laugh. David was so easy to love. He touched so many people's lives in his short time here on earth. I think I can speak for everyone that knew David, He made a Great Impact on all of our lives. He will never be forgotten by anyone that knew him. My days are lost without him and the sun doesn't shine the same anymore and I don't think it ever will. I miss my angel so much. I know you are with us always David, and you will live on in our hearts forever! I am so lost right now, it's so hard to know, I can't see your sweet face or hear your sweet voice. I miss hearing your footsteps in the house and you saying, " Mama don't worry about me, I am fine." The day you left this earth, you took a part of me with you. There is a big hole in my heart and no one will ever take your place or the love we shared with one another! Sometimes the pain in my heart is so bad and I don't know what to do except call on Jesus. If it wasn't for Him, we could not have made it this far. I know you are in a better place, my sweet child, and even if you had the chance to come back I know you wouldn't, you have no more sickness, no more pain, You are free at last from it all, and you are having the time of your life. Our son has made it to paradise, and one day when we get there, oh what a reunion that will be. I will get to hold and kiss and hug you once more! I live for that day when we will all be a family again. Hamlet, Darius and I will get there one day, but until we do, you keep doing what you are doing and know we love and miss you so much! You were a fighter, and nothing ever got you down, even with all you had to endure here on earth. I know God will keep you safe in His loving arms. You were never afraid, you took things as they came to you, and you won the battle, my sweet baby! You are safe in God's loving hands! My son you will forever be loved and missed by all, you changed our lives forever and for the better, Thank You Leon!

You can visit David's website: <http://members.fortunecity.com/david5/index.html>

David's symbols are a basketball and music.

John (1-24-84), the son of George and Annette Walker, was killed in an auto accident 10-12-02. Annette shares:

As you well know this has been the most difficult time in our lives. I'm not sure if it is better or worse that we traveled immediately through the entire major holidays and John's birthday. I think his birthday, which was on January 24th, was the most difficult for me. I could not believe that the son I gave birth to years ago wasn't here with us in this mortal life to celebrate. However, we have been very fortunate to receive support from many, including you. In the days after John's death I received 28 letters from mothers who had lost children. Those letters were the most meaningful to me and I even carried one around with me at all times. I suppose it was a reminder that I was not alone.

There are many wonderful stories of love and service within the tragedy of John's death. In the weeks before his death he had written many papers discussing his deep spiritual commitments and his love for the Savior. He had interviewed for his mission on Wednesday before his death. He had been to a church dance in the hours before his accident and logged back onto his computer @ 12:10 a.m. It seems that he had gone out for food when his accident occurred.

In the moments after his death we could not have wished for a more loving and compassionate rescue team. We met with the Lehi Fire Department personnel when we traveled to Utah, as well as those at American Fork Hospital where he was taken to be pronounced. There was excellent communication between the nurse who stayed with him and our family after his death. This wonderful nurse asked us questions about John so she "could talk to him about himself." A friend's daughter who lived just blocks from the hospital went and stayed with John's body until his transfer to the mortuary. During those hours she sang familiar songs to him from his childhood such as "I Am A Star Shining Brightly." MedJet made all arrangements for his transfer home and because of them John arrived home on Sunday after his death on Saturday. My closest friend of 30 years, who lives in Sandy, Utah, traveled with him.

I am working on John's story as I would wish it to be written, but wanted to give you some details, as you have been so kind. Because of the numerous stories related to "A Star Shining Brightly," we will most certainly choose a star as a symbol for John. We're just not certain if it will be a particular one. We gave the Wedgewood 2002 Star Ornament signed by Lord Wedgewood to all those who took such good care with John from his death until his arrival home. We gave Nambe 2002 Free-Hand Star Ornaments to his friends at school. Our Christmas card was also dedicated to John with a gold star on a black background. I am working on putting together a packet of all those details for you. Thank you for your caring and for all the work you do on behalf of those such as our family. I have been quite overwhelmed with my list. You would have to be very dedicated and organized. I have just begun reading the stories of the children and parents such as yours whose stories you sent. We always thought we "knew the pain" but little did we know. I will also include pictures of our family in your package.

Thank you again for your concern and I would love to know more about your son, Jim.

An amazing person has obviously evolved from your "loss of" or "mortal separation from" young Jim. I'm still working on how to define the numerous things related to John's death. I will write you again soon.

The following is from John's obituary:

John's home was Gadsden, Alabama, where he attended Episcopal Day School, Eura Brown School, and Westbrook Christian School. He was a boarding student at McCallie School, Chattanooga, Tennessee, eighth through eleventh grades, where he was a member of the Beta Club and vice president of his junior class. He also lettered in football, wrestling, and track, was Magna Cum Laude on the national Latin exam and a National Council of Teachers of English award nominee. He was an accomplished classical pianist, won an Alabama state championship in youth chess and trained in martial arts (Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu). He graduated from Gadsden High School, class of 2002, with an advanced academic degree. He was attending Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, pursuing a degree in film arts. John was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He was an Eagle Scout, earning 31 merit badges and attended the 1997 National Scout Jamboree in Washington, D.C. He was a National Rifle Association pro-marksman. He toured Italy and Greece with the McCallie School Latin club and was chosen and served as an intern in Hollywood, California, with the film production company Guardian Pictures.

John's symbol is a star.

Aaron, son of June Brown was accidentally shot 01-08-96.

Thank you again for remembering my son Aaron, tomorrow will be my 7th year with out him, I don't know sometimes how I have made it without his smiling face. I miss him so much sometimes I can hardly bear it. I want you to know you are an Angel to me and all of those letters, cards, everything you have sent me are so important to me, I have saved every one of them. Aaron would have been 20 years old in February and I wonder all the time what his life would have been like and even how he would look. He will always be my baby.

Aaron's symbols are a heart with wings, sun, fish and angel.

**CHOCOLATE,
MAKES MY CLOTHES shrink**

**If you are a bereaved parent and would like more information about Lamentations
email me:**

dinah@cumberlandcollege.edu