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# LAMENTATIONS

Issue 86

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

June-July, 2004

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**J.I.M.**'s Conference 2004 was such a healing time for me and I hope it was for all who attended. Thank you for sharing your children and your grief. There were so many touching experiences. The Candle Light Service was so meaningful and touching. Each of us parents said our child(ren)'s name(s), we then lined up the candles on the stage their names printed under the candle. We were then given our child(ren)'s candle to take home with us. Thanks so much to the Ohio Chapters of The Compassionate Friends for planning the service. Judy Rose sang her original song, *Day By Day*, she wrote just for the service in memory of her son, Scott. The words are printed below. I am hoping she will record the song so we can all have the privilege of playing it over and over again. It was, in the words of Young Jim, "AWESOME!"

Elaine Stillwell's keynote address made each of us more comfortable in our "grief" skin, helping us to realize that we will survive our grief... and none of us will forget her prayer for others who don't understand our grief. The list of myths people have about grief are on the website under "Keynote Speaker."

Thanks to each facilitator of the workshops. We added new ones this year and they were well received. I hope to hear suggestions and comments, from those of you who attended, on how we can make the workshops meet the desires and needs of those who will attend next year.

The dedication of the Christmas Box Angel was so touching, and those in attendance said that as Rosemary Smith was unveiling the Angel, there were butterflies that flew up from the back of the statute. You can't tell me that our children weren't telling us they were around and wanted us to know. I hope you will visit "Conference Events" to see the pictures of the conference. After the dedication we had the mixing of the Earth Ceremony, and then Rosemary sprinkled some of the combined earth around the statue.

Following the Earth Ceremony, we had the balloon release and I have heard from 2 different families in Hittons, Virginia, and one in Jonesville, VA. who found the balloons. Now they know about our children and they will remember finding the balloons.

Each parent who attended had their picture taken with their child(ren)'s picture and these pictures will be included with the documentary. You can check Rosemary's website, [www.childrenofdome.com](http://www.childrenofdome.com) for updates on the documentary.

## Grief Grafts

**Scott Rose (2-19-63), son of Jim and Judy Rose, died in an auto accident, 7-4-83.**

These are the words to Judy Rose's song, *Day by Day*:

### Day By Day

Written and performed by Judy Rose for J.I.M.'s Conference  
In Memory of Scott Rose, 5-19-04

#### I

I know you're here, I know you're here,  
I feel your touch so near,  
You went away, but I wanted you to stay  
We'll be together again, someday  
But until then, when we meet again  
I'll do the best I can... Day by Day

#### II

I know you're here, I know you're here,  
I feel your touch so near,  
We miss you every single day  
We have so much we want to say  
But until then, when we meet again  
I'll do the best I can... Day by Day

#### III

I know you're here, I know you're here,  
I feel your touch so near,  
I miss your smile, then I cry awhile  
I'd walk 10,000 miles to lay down this trial  
But until then, when we meet again  
I'll do the best I can... Day by Day

IV

I know you're here, I know you're here,  
I feel your touch so near,  
I see your wink, and hold on to that blink  
I'm sure you're closer than I think... Right now  
But until then, when we meet again  
I'll do the best I can... Day by Day

V

I know you're here, I know you're here,  
I feel your touch so near,  
I thank God for you, He helps me make it through  
The day is coming soon when I will be with you  
But until then, when we meet again  
I'll do the best I can... Day by Day

**Scott's symbols are a rose and clowns.**

**Daren Long (1-7-71), son of Linda Flory, died from an auto accident, 3-12-96.**

Linda wrote the following;

*I will tell you a little bit about my son--Daren Long. He was a very handsome young man. He left behind twin babies--a year old. He played soccer from 4th grade until the time of his death. He also coached soccer and was quite good as a coach and soccer player. The night of the accident, Darin and his brother had gone out. They had a few too many drinks. On they way home, they had their accident. Both boys were pronounced dead, but someone decided to do CPR on my oldest son. He survived but has no memories of the accident. I can look out my back door and see where the accident happened, and in fact, passed it on the way to the hospital. It never dawned on me that my sons were there. Maybe*

*that was a blessing. My daughter-in-law has remarried and does not let me see my grandchildren. I have been going to court and trying to do things the right way. The laws have changed in Ohio, but they need more amendments to this law. My son and his wife were having problems at the time of his death. I had the children for 4 1/2 months--24 hours a day, but she never called or asked about them. I also watched them when they worked and after Darin died. I was not against her remarrying. She is young. I expected that. All I want to do is see my grandchildren. Due to my health, I may not get to see them, but they will someday know about their father and his family.*

*So, that is a little bit of my story about my beautiful son. He was as beautiful on the inside as he was on the outside. He had over 600 people at his funeral and that was people who knew and loved him as I did. Was he perfect? No but I loved him just the same.*

**Darin's symbol is a soccer ball.**

**Julie Howell Tutt (3-3-64), daughter of Eddie and Sue Tutt, died from a brain hemorrhage, 1-9-03.**

Sue explained Julie's symbol:

*Julie was a beautiful, bright, loving and quite charming spirit missed by literally hundreds besides her family.*

*If I must choose a symbol, a rainbow will be Julie's! On the afternoon before her celebration of life services, on January 8<sup>th</sup>, friends coming to Frankfort from Cincinnati (where Julie lived) saw a rainbow in the sky-it was a cold, cloudy day but just as they arrived in town, the sun came out and a rainbow appeared. They saw it as a sign from Julie that she was okay- with God as He promised.*

**Julie's symbols are a rainbow and a rooster.**

**Terry and Alene Browning's son, Roy (8-11-72), completed suicide 10-30-02.**

Alene shared about Roy's symbols in two different letters:

This letter was written the day of Roy's first anniversary angel date:

*It has been a year since Roy left us and the pain and longing, I suppose, will always be there. I just had to look at today as his first birthday with Jesus, although his birthday was in August. I don't miss him any less today than I have for the past year. Roy's symbol is an eagle. He loved them and the day of his funeral, an eagle soared over the funeral home the entire time we were having his service.*

*Today I was at his grave 3 times; early in the morning to talk with him (I often go alone to have my talks with him) and two other times with family members, and I noticed the eagle the first time I went. Then my friend and I went the second time and we were driving home and she said "Alma, don't think I'm crazy, but a big eagle has been flying overhead the whole time we've been at the grave and now it's following us home." I told her she wasn't crazy, that was Roy letting us know he's still with us. It made my heart feel peaceful and warm.*

*Roy was a blessing to my life. A friend called me last week and said, "Alene, only think of the good times," and I told her, "that is all I had with Roy; there weren't any bad times to think of."*

*My life has changed so much in the past year; so many ups and downs; things that were once so familiar to me are not any more. Roy's wife is already re-married and expecting a child, but I still have my 2 grandchildren and for them I am thankful, and for people like you, but I'm sorry for what brings us together.*

*It lets me know there are other people out there who have lived through what I have gone through. At first I didn't care if I got out of bed and I would have been better off had I died with Roy Wayne and in a lot of ways I did. I built my life around and for Roy. He was all I had since his daddy trucked for a living, but in Roy Wayne's own special way, he keeps urging me on from heaven. Roy's smile would light up a room. He was always and still is so precious to his father and me.*

This letter was sent later:

*Our precious memories are all we have. We only had them for such a short time, but their memories will live in our hearts forever. They were here and they existed and that is what we want people to remember. Sometimes we want to shout it out that was my child and he lived. That's the worst thing to me is people don't want to mention them because they think it will make you sad or cry like they never existed and they did.*

*I am in the nursing profession and I have worked in an emergency room for 10 years (which I no longer do), but I would stand at the head of a stretcher and*

*watch mothers lay over their children and cry at their loss and I thought I had compassion and I did to a certain extent, but I didn't have a clue of the devastation and sadness that that mother felt. No one can fully understand until you have been there.*

*I was coming home from work the other day (I have since taken a job in Lexington at a nursing home) and I was talking to God as I often do and I thought if I had 2 wishes that I know God would grant, I would first wish my child back and then I would wish that not another mother from this moment on would know what it was like to lose a child. When I got home, it was like a light bulb had come on and I thought why would I wish my child back into this cruel world. He is in such a beautiful place.*

*Our children let us know that we should pay attention to the small things. I had gone to Lexington to interview for the job I am now doing and was on the interstate coming home and looked up and saw the biggest eagle flying overhead and I talked to Roy just like he was here because, in spirit, he is, and I said, "I know, Roy, you're just letting me know you're watching over me." Roy comes to me in dreams sometimes just to let me know he's okay! So we need to pay attention to the small things; things I used to never notice are now the things that stand out to me.*

**Roy's symbol is an eagle.**

**George and Carol Kiparisus' son, John Gregory, Jr. (6-17-75) was killed in an auto accident, 3-9-03.**

Carol wrote the following letter, two months after John's death:

*All of this is new to me because John just passed away on March 9, 2003. Once I start talking about John, it's hard to stop because I have so many wonderful, beautiful memories of my beloved son.*

*He is my only child and I have two stepdaughters, Krista and Elisha that wrote the second poem (below) in memory of John.*

*As a child, he was so affectionate and showed how much he cared for you. He had such pretty, thick blonde hair and loved Under-roos. He had every pair. I can see him now. We had our "tough love" during his teenage years, but I was always there for him and he knew it. He was married in 1999 and 2002 they were separated and he was at my home for the past 6 months. He grew into a very strong, loving, beautiful young man. He was so full of life and enjoyed so many things in life; music, skiing, football, ping-pong. etc. He loved the South Carolina*

*Gamecocks! He had his 4-wheeler, which he rode whenever his friends, family, etc. wanted to. He loved children, especially babies after a bath with baby powder and lotion on them. He was my joy, my all.*

*When I start thinking and missing him, I focus on his face and looking at that beautiful smile on his face and it always puts one on mine.*

This poem was written to Carol for Mother's Day from her niece, Breand:

### **He Only Took My Hand**

Last night while I was trying to sleep,  
My son's voice I did hear,  
I opened my eyes and looked around  
But he did not appear.

He said "Mom, you've got to listen,  
You've got to understand,  
God didn't take me from you,  
Mom, He only took my hand."

When I called out in pain that night,  
The instant that I died,  
He reached down and took my hand,  
And pulled me to His side.

He pulled me up  
And saved me from the misery and pain,  
My body was hurt so badly inside,  
I could never be the same.

My search is really over now,  
I've found happiness within,  
All the answers to my heart and to my empty dreams,  
And all that might have been.

I love you and miss you so,  
And I'll always be nearby.  
My body's gone forever,  
But my spirit will never die.

And so, you must go on now,  
Live one day at a time; just understand  
God did not take me from you,  
He only took my hand.

This poem was written by his sisters:

### **Johnny**

As an infant, oh so small  
His tiny fingers, I studied them all.  
To hold him in my arms, and nibble on his ear  
My sweet little baby boy, I loved so dear.

I stood there and watched him as he slept.  
I would be there for him before he wept.  
My precious baby grew before my eyes.  
I cherish every memory from the years gone by.

And as these years passed, I watched him grow,  
From a toddler to adolescent; I loved them so.  
The older he got, and changed and matured  
Suddenly before me a man had emerged.

And in this man was a heart full of love,  
For his family and friends and the Lord up above.  
My special little man, oh how I will mourn.  
You have completed my life since the day you were born.

I find myself asking, "Why did you leave today?  
Why did the angels take you away?  
Why aren't you here where you belong?  
Why have you left me, why are you gone?"

I have to thank God for the time He allowed.  
And to know He wanted him back makes me very proud.  
I know my son's life was not lived in vain.  
As I see all your smiles when I speak his name.

He lived his life to the fullest every day,

And taught us something in his own special way.  
Now, once again I watch him sleep.  
I pray to the Lord, his soul to keep.

A guardian angel, you've always been one.  
And I know you'll stay near us, my beautiful son.  
With those sweet eyes of heavenly blue,  
My beloved angel we will never forget you.

In loving memory of Johnny,  
From your sisters

**Johnny's symbol is a Gamecock and 4-wheeler.**

**Dave Regan (6-1-72), son of Tom and Pat, was killed in the  
line of duty as a New York City Policeman, 5-28-00.**

Pat shared these two stories:

*On Tuesday, December 4, 2001, we were invited to attend Medal Day in New York City where our deceased son, Police Officer David Alexander Regan, would be honored. We were being driven into the city in a police car. PO Matt N. would be picking us up early. I had gone into my attic to get some Christmas wrapping paper for the gifts I had for the N. and W. families.*

*I was remembering back 18 months. Matt and Dave had made an arrest on May 28, 2000. Matt stayed back at the precinct to do the paperwork and Dave went out on the 911 call. Dave did not return alive. Matt's mother's name was Pat, father's name is Tom, and wife's name is Tam. (These are my name, my husband's name and our son's fiancée's name -- an unusual coincidence.) Matt and Tam N. just had a baby boy. I wanted to give them gifts for the family and the child.*

*On June 2, 2000, two days after Dave was buried, his fiancée, Tom, and I went to see Ken W. in the hospital. Ken had been driving the police car in which Dave had died when the newspaper delivery truck struck it at an intersection. We met Ken and his wife, Christine. Chris was visibly pregnant. I was very emotional. I said to her: "If you have a boy, would you consider using "David" as a middle name?" She said: "Yes." We both hugged and cried. A month later*

there was a memorial mass and Chris and Ken were there. Chris and I spoke again. She told me that she was having a girl and she was going to call her "Regan." In November, Kayla Regan-Ann was born on Staten Island. There is already a Kayla Regan (age 5, our granddaughter living in Garden City.) (Both Kayla Regans have the biggest brown eyes.) Now, in December 2001, I was preparing to wrap a stained glass Christmas light for the W. family and a teddy bear dressed in a pink outfit for little Kayla Regan-Ann. Christmas is about children and gifts.

Right next to the wrapping paper in the attic there were some of the decorations that I used in my Dad's room in the nursing home. At Easter time I always brought in a floral arrangement of purple irises to put near his bed. The artificial irises were right near the Christmas paper. They made me think of Dad early that morning. He and Dave had been very close.

Medal Day was an extremely long and emotional day. All the police officers who died in the line of duty in New York City in the last two years were awarded medals posthumously. We were the first to be called and then we watched the 23 families of officers killed in the World Trade Center as they walked across the stage to receive the medal and shake hands with the dignitaries.

Projected on a huge screen behind the families were pictures of their loved ones. Dave's blue eyes seemed to be staring at all of us.

We returned home from New York City at 5 p.m. My Mom was on the phone when we opened the door. (Mom has been recuperating at our house since she fell on November 12 and broke her shoulder and injured her knee and eye.)

She had just received a call that my Dad had pneumonia.

The next day Mom had doctors' appointments. I called the nursing home and was told that Dad was doing better. The following day, Dad's doctor called and said that his temperature was OK but he "was very tired." His breathing was shallow and he was not fighting the pneumonia. "A DNR is in place." When she said that I felt like I had been kicked in the heart. How could we be at that place so quickly?

Mom, Tom and I and Johnny and Tina (my brother and his wife) quickly went to the hospital. Dad's breathing was very shallow. I stroked his head. Mom talked to him. Then Johnny called me out into the hallway. He asked if a priest had been called and I told him that Dad had been anointed. As soon as we came back into the room, my Mom said to my Dad: "John. You have to say an Act of Contrition." (She said the prayer for him. Mom knew how sick Dad was.) Mom and I kissed Dad's forehead. I made the Sign of the Cross on his head and on his hands. (I have my father's hands. Dave had them, too.) Then we went home.

The next morning, Friday, at 6:45 a.m., I called the nursing home and spoke to Dad's nurse. She said Dad was the same. Usually I baby-sit on Friday starting

at 7:15 but today Shalini (my daughter-in-law) was going into work late because our granddaughter, Kayla, was to be in her first holiday concert at 9:30 a.m. I planned to attend the concert and would baby-sit after the performance.

Normally I generate a report at Franklin Medical Center on Saturday morning. I felt I had better get it done this Friday morning. I quickly dressed and went to the hospital. As I drove, I was thinking about my Dad. In my mind I was saying to God: "You helped me when Dave died and I'm going to need it again." As soon as I switched on the computer in the Pastoral Care Office, the phone rang. It was my husband telling me that my father had died.

I rushed through the report. As I walked down the hospital steps, there was a New York City police car parked right in front of me. (I knew there was a prisoner in the hospital that they were guarding but I had never seen a police car in this location before.) As I passed by, a young policeman was going off shift. I watched as he got into the car and then walked over to talk to him.

Briefly, I told him about Dave and then I told him that I felt that he was there as a sign from my son. Dave wanted me to know that he had been with my Dad to help him cross over into Heaven. The young man was very nice—gentle, caring—as Dave could be. He was a little surprised, too.

I noticed the 105 precinct number pins that were on the collar of his uniform. Dave and Dad wore the same number in the fire department and the police department – 102. It had been very important to my son to wear my father's shield number (and it had been available in the NYPD which was a surprise.) The young police officer sitting in the car listened as I continued: "I know you are wearing the number 105 but, from where I stand, that 5 is really a 2 turned upside down. That's what happened to my world when Dave died. My world turned upside down. It happened again today when I got the phone call about my Dad. I'm glad you were here. Thanks for listening to my story. God bless." He smiled and I noticed his moustache. Then I got in my own car and drove home.

After making some phone calls, I went to my parents' home to pick up the deed to the cemetery and to gather up my Dad's fire chief's uniform. Mom keeps important information in a dresser drawer. On the top of the dresser is Dave's high school graduation picture. Again I smiled as I looked at my son with his moustache. He looked so much like the police officer I saw at Franklin.

At 9:30 a.m., instead of being at my granddaughter's concert, my Mom, brother and I were sitting around a desk in the funeral home planning the wake and burial. My brother said to the funeral director: "My father always had a moustache. A few months ago they shaved it off in the nursing home. Do you think you can recreate the moustache?" The director said he would try but he would need a picture of my Dad.

*I went home and found a picture of my Mom and Dad in his room at the nursing home. The purple irises were very visible behind them. I dropped the picture off at the funeral home. As I was about to make the turn onto Lakeville Road, I stopped and stared. Standing tall, in full bloom was a spectacular purple iris. Some would say that the weather has been unusually warm on Long Island this year. It has fooled the spring flowers. But what are the chances that a single purple iris would appear in December just when I needed it? For me, the iris was the sign of new life -- of resurrection. God wanted me to be aware of the connection of my father and my son, of Christmas and Easter and to notice the amazing things that He can do. I e-mailed the story to many people that night and showed others the purple iris as we drove passed it.*

*Midmorning, on Saturday, I arrived at the funeral home with more photos of Dad to create a picture board. I was working in the lobby when a florist delivered an arrangement of purple irises. I checked. They were not for my father. Just at that moment, the director asked me to come and look at my Dad and see what I thought of the moustache he had created. It was perfect! My Dad looked wonderful in his uniform – so handsome, so much younger and very much at peace. I thanked the funeral director. As we walked back into the lobby, I told the director about the iris. He went up to the delivered arrangement and removed two purple irises. He took me back to where my Dad was and we placed the irises among the flowers covering the coffin.*

*The morning of the funeral Mass, when we arrived at the funeral home, we found that someone had put a red rose right near my Dad's cheek. I spoke to the director about it and he said it was not something that the funeral home does. He felt it must have been done by the firemen (the honor guard) who left after we did the night before. My mother's name is Rose. I felt the flower was there for a reason. I removed the two irises from the top of the coffin and placed them inside.*

*For me, they represented the new life my Dad had created in Johnny and me.*

*The funeral Mass was in the little Polish church where my Dad was baptized, married, brought his children to be baptized and walked me down the aisle when I was married. I wanted a special funeral Mass for my Dad and it was.*

*My brother, mother and I worked on it and it included his grandchildren. There were surprises. There often are when God steps in.*

*The men in the volunteer fire department were wonderful! There was such respect – such beautiful ritual at the funeral home and as we passed by the firehouse. They were doing it for Dave and my Dad. Both men had been members of the same fire company. My father and my son must have been proud looking down from Heaven. We had a police escort as we drove to the cemetery. Each time the police car drove around us to stop traffic at the next intersection, I knew we were being protected and directed by a love from above.*

*On December 10, 2001, on his 87th birthday, John Okulski was laid to rest near his grandson, Dave, in Holy Road Cemetery. With John were buried a rose, two irises and an artificial moustache.*

*When Matthew Alexander Regan was born early in the morning on March 16, 2004, his Dad, Brian Sr., said he looked like his older sister, Kayla, younger brother, Brian Jr., plus Uncle Dave. Brian said that the baby had a distinctive nose . . . and he does, though I can't be sure it's like his deceased uncle, David Alexander Regan.*

*As I held my newest grandson, I was awed by the miracle of birth. I thanked God that the delivery had gone well and the baby was okay. But as I held Matt, a felt sadness seep up from my soul as I thought that Dave had never held his own child and that we could never share that joy with him as grandparents.*

*Dave loved Kayla and Brian. I knew he would love Matt, too.*

*I wanted to get flowers for my daughter-in-law and the baby. I went to the florist where we got our bridal bouquets forty years ago. The flowers were to be from Grandma, Grandpa and Uncle Dave so I chose a container with Peter Rabbit on it. The florist did a beautiful job filling the container with blue, yellow and white flowers plus putting in some Irish touches because it was St. Patrick's Day and the baby has an Irish last name. But Matt is a combination of Irish, Polish and Indian.*

*When Kayla and Brian were born, their Dad arranged for a stork displayed on the front lawn with information about each child. This time, Brian Sr. wanted the display to be a sailboat. A half hour after Brian called and ordered what he wanted, a Jeep pulled up in front of the house. I was watching Kayla and Brian Jr. and was at the window when a young man got out of the car and waved to me.*

*The guy looked very much like our deceased son, Dave. The young man was filled with energy. Quickly the sailboat was out of the car. Kayla, Brian and I went outside to watch the man set it up.*

*I was curious and asked the guy what his ethnic combination was. He gave me a big smile and said: "Italian and Polish." (People often thought Dave looked Italian but I always felt he inherited his looks from my side of the family . . . the Polish side.) The young man was really great. We talked about Matt's birth. I marveled that he was able to print the information about the baby so quickly and could be assembling the boat in such a short time. You could tell he liked to work with his hands and he was creative, just like our son.*

*Then I asked the young man his name. "Dave," he replied. I was quiet for a while...I asked if he liked his name. He responded: "You bet! I never knew a Dave I didn't like." Of course, I told him about our Dave. He said all the right things.*

*I look for signs of connection . . . I needed to feel that David Alexander Regan was watching over and blessing his new nephew, Matthew Alexander Regan . . . and he is . . .*

**Dave's symbols are a rabbit, his NYPD star badge # 102 (and I am including an Iris).**

**Pat and Linda Smith's son, Tommy (12-9-73), died from meningitis, 3-18-00.**

Pat sent this letter of thanks:

*Thank you for the note in remembrance of Tommy's anniversary. It is ironic that the Eskimo legend contained in the note is also the same thing my sisters sent me and is hanging on our wall. As a matter of fact, Christian Brothers High School has a Memory Garden for a select few and they approached us about putting in a memorial for Tommy, but we had to pick a saying. We picked the Eskimo legend, for it pertains to all people in the garden not just Tommy. It is a rotten club we belong to, but your compassion and thoughtfulness has helped ease the pain that never goes away. As you know, the longer the timeframe from the death the less support is given, but your little notes really do help. I think you would have liked Tommy. Every time I am outside after the sun goes down and look up to the sky, I see a star and say hello to Tommy.*

*Tommy was a gifted athlete and after winning three state soccer championships in a row, received an athletic scholarship to the University of Memphis. He played there for 4 years, while earning his Bachelor's Degree in business. After his death we were approached by the Athletic Department who wanted to do something as a tribute to Tommy. A "Spirit Award" was created, given annually to the player who most resembled Tommy and the high standards he set for himself. The award says " In Memory of Tommy Smith, for the high standards he set in Academics, Sportsmanship and Enthusiasm; Contributions to the University, Love of the game and Teamwork." This award is presented at the Senior Banquet.*

**Tommy's symbols are a soccer ball and a smile.**

**Merri Kathryn (64-78), daughter of Willie and Ella Prater,  
died as the result of an auto accident, 4-3-96.**

Ella described the anniversary of Merri Kathryn's death:

*I try to maintain focus that this is April 3, 2004, not April 3, 1996, but the mind and the mother's heart do not automatically make the distinction. On this date in 1996 I was so sure that I would not, indeed could not, live this long with so much pain. However, I am eight years past that day and still living! The human spirit is truly remarkable.*

*It has been so long since I have spoken with you or Rosemary, but I think of you so very often, and I always breathe a word of prayer for both of you. Your ministry is so vast, but your heartache is much like that of all of us whom you have touched. Your loss is very much a part of you and all that you do.*

*Since I last spoke with you and Rosemary, my dad passed away after a battle with cancer. Much of my time was devoted to him and his needs. My mom survives him, and I now try to meet her needs. Running two households is a challenge! My daughter and her husband are in the process of making a move from Charlotte to Lexington!!! Needless to say I am very excited. My two little grandsons, Logan (6) and Matthew (20 months), will be seeing their "Nan" more often. Christopher is finishing his junior year of college. He has grown into such a fine young man. Selfishly, I dread the time when he will become completely independent. My empty nest is just around the corner.*

*I have begun working with Willie in his appraisal business. I do the residential appraisals; he does the commercial appraisals and all of the litigation cases. Life is so unpredictable. I did not think I would ever leave the classroom. Merri Kathryn's friends are my surrogate children. Through them I taste a bit of what life with her would be. Her class has excelled. Those closest to her have been successful in school and are making a difference in this world. One close friend gave birth to triplets in January! One made it to the top fifty in AMERICAN IDOL! One is making a name for himself in virology research, currently working with bio-terrorism threats! The list goes on, and Merri Kathryn goes with them wherever their lives take them. I am so blessed that they share their lives with me. I must hold the record for being the oldest bridesmaid or matron of honor in a wedding, but I have been so touched that her friends continue to love her and want her to be a part of important events in their lives.*

**Merri Kathryn's symbols are an evergreen tree, butterfly and a "Merri" angel.**

**Mark and Ruth Nichols' son, Matt (11-7-84), was killed in an auto accident, 9-23-00.**

Ruth sent this truism:

**A Death Has Occurred**

*A death has occurred and everything is changed. We are painfully aware that life can never be the same again, that yesterday is over, those relationships, once rich have ended. But there is another way to look upon this truth.*

*If life now went on the same, without the presence of the one who has died, we could only conclude that the life we remember made no contribution, filled no space, meant nothing. The fact that this person left behind a place that cannot be filled is a high tribute to this individual. Life can be the same after a trinket has been lost, but never after the loss of a treasure~*

**Matt's symbols are a dove and a dragonfly.**

**Nathan Eisert (5-27-82), son of Jan Ulrich, died from suicide, 6-8-02. Since Nathan's death, Jan has been very involved in the prevention of suicide in Kentucky.**

Jan encouraged everyone to contact their state legislators:

*Please support Senate Joint Resolution 148 establishing a suicide prevention advisory committee for the state of Kentucky. For too long, suicide has claimed the lives of approximately 500 Kentuckians each year and, according to Healthy Kentuckians 2010, twice as many Kentuckians die by suicide each year as die by homicide.*

*In 2001, Kentucky's rate of suicide of 12.2 deaths per 100,000 residents is higher than the national average of 10.7 deaths per 100,000 residents, and suicide is the second leading cause of death for citizens ages 15 to 34, and the fourth leading cause of death for citizens ages 35 to 54. Suicide has profound emotional effects on a wide network of family members, friends, colleagues and associates*

*AND has been proven by the United States Air Force to be PREVENTABLE with Leadership, Community, Reduction of Stigma, and Early Intervention (Preventing Suicide: The National Journal February 2004)*

This email was sent later:

*Senator Tom Buford, sponsor of SJR148 was passed with an amendment. I don't know if the working of the amendment was altered or not (see previous email for details). Rep. Mary Lou Marzian and Sheila Schuster, crafter of the 843 commission means they are ready to work hand in hand with the Kentucky Suicide Prevention Planning Group and HHS to bring MORE stakeholders to the table of KY suicide prevention and bring awareness, education and training to our state.*

*On behalf of survivors I want to thank all of you who have worked so hard by our side to bring this issue to fruition. I pray that it means someday suicide will NOT be the 2nd leading cause of death for KY citizens 15 to 34, 4th for those 10 - 14 and 35 to 54, and that it will NOT tragically rob of us our senior citizens.*

*Almost daily now, I am confronted with new survivors, or survivors who are just learning about efforts in the state. Their stories are heart breaking and, sometimes for me, overwhelming. But after I work through the tears and tangled emotions, I am left with more resolve not to give up, to push with all my heart and soul to bring change. And I am grateful to all of you who have picked up this banner, whether or not you have lost a loved one to suicide, and are marching heart and soul right there by my side.*

*Peace, Jan Ulrich- momma of Nathan Eisert 5/27/82-6/8/02*

Jan has written a very touching song, "Tell Them Momma, A Life's Too Much To Lose." I hope you will visit her website for the words and also the Suicide Prevention Action Network of Kentucky.

[www.tellthemmomma.com](http://www.tellthemmomma.com)

[www.span-ky.com](http://www.span-ky.com)

**Alice Isabell's son, Randy Hecox (1-7-69), took his own life,  
7-23-99.**

Since Randy's death, the family has done many things in his memory:

*We have a yearly retreat. There was a write-up about it for parents of suicide children. We take teddy bears to the police department and ambulance crew and fire departments as well, every year after our retreat, we have a road site clean-up four times a year. Randy has a sign with his name on it for the place where we clean up. It is a mile each way near us here.*

**Randy's symbols are a rainbow, remote control car, unicorn and drums.**

Larry and Karen Cantrell have also remembered their son, Jacob Hutcheson, in this manner. If you are interested, Karen provided this information if you want to adopt a road: <http://www.kytc.state.ky.us/Education/Adopt/home.htm>

**Mary Kate Gach's daughter, Stephanie (925-71), was murdered, 10-9-92.**

Mary Kate tells how Stephanie is remembered every year:

*Central Alabama Mensa, a local group of which I'm a member, is poised to once again award a \$500 scholarship in memory of my daughter, Stephanie Alexis Gach. This is the ninth year for this scholarship to be given in Stephanie's memory to either a high school senior or to a student currently enrolled in an institution of higher learning. I am chair of the scholarship committee and it is my honor to present this scholarship each year at the school's awards program. This moment is especially fulfilling and uplifting for me. My child's name is still remembered and is heard by some who never heard it before, and a student is honored in Stephanie's memory. The CAM scholarship program is funded from the group's book sales and also by an anonymous donor.*

**Stephanie's symbol is a brown bunny.**

**Sheriese Lovane (12-16-79), daughter of Drusilla Nailing, died in an auto accident, 7-4-96.**

Drusilla explains her choice for Sheriese's symbol:

*After Sheriese died, I kept seeing this particular bird around me. I would talk to the bird and it would look right at me, like it understood what I was saying. It wasn't any bird. This bird, was a particular color. I've already seen the bird this spring. I smiled when I saw it. I even went to see my daughter. While there, I went over to my sister's house. I looked out her kitchen window, low and behold, there was the bird sitting on her birdbath in the backyard. I said, 'Sheriese, did you follow Mama down her? I know you were making sure Mama got here safe and sound.' Another time, I looked out my sister's front bedroom window. There under her tree in the front yard, was Sheriese. When I looked out the window, you could swear that the bird was looking up at you in the window. Just stirring. Then fluttered up into the tree. I said, 'I don't believe this,' but I do. So for Sheriese's symbol, it's a very pretty bird.*

## **Drew (6-4-73), son of Henry and Marcia Jones, died from complications from Cerebral Palsy, 12-31-92.**

These are two of the ways Henry and Marcia remember Drew:

*Every year, during the first weekend in June, (this year it is on June 4, Drew's birthday) we present the Andrew Jones Resident Teaching Award to the Pediatric resident that exhibits the traits of teaching his peers in the most efficient way, to a graduating Pediatric resident that Henry has mentored and taught. Henry always explains that Andrew taught all of us without saying a word. The Pediatric program that Henry teaches at IU is growing bigger each year. Marcia presents the Andrew Jones Most Compassionate Student Award to a Jr. or Sr. student that compassionately cares for and reaches out to those children who need a peer partner or helps the teacher in the classroom with those Special Needs children like Drew. This award is a lot lower key and usually occurs the last week of May at Andrew's old school. Both awards are accompanied by a plaque and monetary gift for the recipient. This is our way of keeping Drew's memory alive and honoring the life he lived.*

**Drew's symbols are Children of the World, red, yellow, black, white and those that are handicapped and in a wheel chair.**

**Rob and Jody Sergent's daughter, Brittanie (3-20-88), died from a hockey injury, 3-18-02.**

Jody shared one way they keep Brittanie's memory alive:

*When Brittanie died we wanted to do something special for her on her one-year anniversary. Her friends wanted to know if we were going to do something, and at that the time I didn't know. So, I got to thinking that I wanted to do something for not only our family but for Brittanie's friends because they all missed her as much as we do. So I put together a balloon release in her memory at her school. We did it on her one-year anniversary. Her favorite colors were pink and purple so we blew up 3000 pink and purple balloons. At the ceremony at the school one evening we had our pastor and a close uncle say something about Brittanie and then we had a prayer, then we all released our balloons. It was very emotional but I felt like we really reached Brittanie. There were probably about three hundred people there. It was great!!! From that point on I wanted to do this as a tradition for my family. So now it's been two years and on every Christmas we release about 30 pink and purple balloons to remember her. I wanted to continue to have her as apart of our lives in away that we all could do something for her. This is now a tradition for our family at Christmas and on her birthday and anniversary of her death.*

**Brittanie's symbols are dragonflies.**

**Maggie St. Johns has lost three children: Judy (5-23-49) from complications from diabetes, 1-26-93; Jim (9-18-59) from and overdose of Heroin 1-18-94; and Ed (1-11-52) from bleeding in brain after surgery, 1-8-99.**

Maggie explains her ministry:

*I keep very involved in Groww Heavenly Angels, a branch of Groww Grief Recovery. We have a chat each night at 9:30-11:30 EDT and Sundays 6-8 EDT. I send out a weekly newsletter with articles, birthdays, and anniversaries. On birthdays and anniversaries, I send out a special Heartprint page for the son/daughter on*

*this day. I have their picture, poem, and music. I have been in Heavenly Angels since my son Ed died in 1999 and this has been a wonderful way of honoring my three children Judy, Jim and Ed. This is our website that was created by Maria. I got all the information and pictures and she did the beautiful creation.*

<http://www.geocities.com/growwheavenlyangels/ha1.html>

**Judy's symbol is an angel, Jim's is a baseball glove and Ed's is the Scales of Justice.**

**Maureen (7-29-69), daughter of Elaine Craven, was killed in an auto accident, 11-5-89.**

Elaine told of several ways Maureen was honored at her college:

*There were several honors at the time of Maureen's death and even a page dedicated to her in the Univ. of Memphis yearbook. She also had a plaque hanging in the Panhellenic Hall; also, a scholarship was changed to her name from one of the fraternities.*

*A plaque was hung on the Greek Wall of Fame in 1990 in memory of Maureen that read:*

**Maureen E. Craven**

*Sisterhood Award*

**In Memory of Her**

*Eternal Smile*

**And Blue Eyes**

*That Always Reflected*

**The Bonds of Love**

*In Her Heart*

**IN MEMORIAM**

*Maureen Elizabeth Craven*

*July 29, 1969-November 5, 1989*

-Annette Desiderio & Scott Stalcup

*To be a Greek, a person must be a unique individual for belonging to the system, something special only to those who experience it. Maureen Elizabeth Craven, a member of Delta Gamma, was one of those special, unique people who touch the lives of others with her joy and love of life.*

*Early on the morning of November 5, 1989, Maureen was killed in a car accident. She left her parents, Ret. Deputy Police Chief William and Elaine Craven, her sister, Mrs. Patricia Craven Williams, her two brothers, William and Dennis Craven, and her grandmother, Mrs. Marjorie Raney Craven.*

*Maureen, a native Memphian, helped the University and Greek services with strong dedication and conviction. She served on many boards and committees, including the Greek Public Relations Board and the Women's Panhellenic Council. Maureen also zealously pursued her career in Delta Gamma, holding numerous offices.*

*A scholarship in Maureen's name was established through the Delta Gamma Foundation and will be administrated by the local Delta Gamma chapter. Annually, a local sister of Delta Gamma will receive the scholarship.*

*Even though life does continue, it is not the same without seeing Maureen's smiling face or hearing her discreet "hi, guys" as she walked across the campus or in one of her many meetings after hours.*

*The people who were fortunate enough to know Maureen learned about life from her. She always held her friends close to her and showed us that one can never have too many friends. Even people who were just passing friends were touched by her health. Hopefully, her memory will continue to teach the important values in life: hold friends dear to the heart always and never turn down an opportunity to make a new friend.*

*The Greek*

*Ideal 177*

#### **MAUREEN CRAVEN SISTERHOOD AWARD**

***Singleton:***

*Before I introduce this year's recipient of the Sisterhood Award, I wish to thank the Brothers of Sigma Phi Epsilon for graciously allowing us to rename this award in memory of one of our beloved students.*

*The Maureen E. Craven Award is being started this year to honor the memory of Maureen E. Craven, a Delta Gamma, who tragically was killed last November. Those of you who knew Maureen will never forget her friendly smile and everlasting energy, and how supportive she was, not only for her Delta Gamma sisters, but also of the entire Greek System.*

*The term sisterhood encompasses many aspects about an individual. A good sister is one to trust, to respect, and of course, be a good friend. She is helpful, industrious, and diligent, both academically and in her sorority life.*

*The Sisterhood Award exemplifies the high ideals and dedication that all Sorority members strive to achieve. This year's recipient has proven that she is an invaluable asset to her particular Sorority, and even further, the Greek System.*

POEM BY SCOTT W. STALCUP

*Love, friendship and truth shone from her Irish, icy eyes,  
Piercing our delusive souls and freezing our deceitful voices,  
Stopping us dead cold in the tracks of our casual lies  
That we tell to our friends, lovers and selves.*

*Then in an instant, her warm glow of a smile  
Radiated from her lips and melted our cold, numb hearts,  
Warming them with a burst of love that smashed our hearts' frosty tile  
Into meaningless, fragmented bits, exposing our own truths.*

*Just as quickly as she came to us, she was ripped from us,  
Into a new land of no tears, anguish or chilly hearts.  
And she continues her unique work in a grander way,  
Building little fires in all our hearts so we can warm the world.*

*(In 1990 Desoto University of Memphis yearbook honoring Maureen E. Craven)*

**Maureen's symbol is an anchor for Delta Gamma.**

**Robert and Linda Mattingly's son, Kevin (12-16-78),  
died from colon cancer, 1-19-00.**

Linda has done several things in memory of Kevin:

*I have made a memory quilt, which consists of twenty-five pictures of Kevin, set together with a horse print material. It was featured in "The Ky. Standard," a Bardstown newspaper. I also made one for each of my daughters, each of which contained pictures of Kevin and each of them together. I recently made one for a friend of mine whose son had shot himself only two days before Christmas. I surprised them with it and they really liked it.*

*I have a memorial at the cemetery where he is buried, that has a bench, an arch that holds flowers, and two large angel figurine in a brick chip floor. I also have a memorial flowerbed that I'm still working on that will contain a discarded satellite dish with his picture on it.*

*When you listen to Kevin's site, I hope you have the sound turned up, so you can hear the music, and see all the pages. The first page, which has the song "Simple Man" by Lynrd Skynrd, was Kevin's favorite song. It would be the first song he would play on his guitar when he got it out, and the last one he would play before he would put it away. We even played it at the graveyard, the day of his funeral. But you didn't ask me about all that, did you? I'm sorry, but when I start talking about him, I just go on and on.. I could write a book, and who knows, maybe someday I will. But you know that feeling too. I just hate the word CANCER!!! I believe that it is taking more and more of our young people every day. Well there I go again, so I'll stop this time. Thanks a lot.*

The following article was in The Kentucky Standard about Kevin:

### ***Kevin Mattingly lost battle to cancer at 21***

Stacy S. Manning  
The Kentucky Standard

*As a child, Kevin Mattingly loved the outdoors. He grew up riding ponies and horses, spending time on his four-wheeler and strumming his guitar. When Kevin was diagnosed with colon cancer at 19, his love of horses, music, family and friends carried him through some of the roughest times of his life.*

*In honor of Kevin and to help keep his memory alive, his mother, Linda Mattingly, has created memorial quilts in Kevin's honor. Two quilts are finished with a third being planned. Both completed quilts have 25 pictures of Kevin at some of the happiest times of his life. One quilt is bound together with a horse pattern fabric, the other with guitars and cowboy hats.*

*They are images the family says, that remind them of the brave young man who, even in the most difficult and painful times, tried to keep a smile on his face. That smile became Kevin's trademark. Everywhere he went, people would comment on his smile, Linda Mattingly said.*

*Kevin's sister, Karen Miles, remembers one of the last times she went horseback riding with her brother. It was the night before his last surgery and Kevin knew he had to be up at 4 a.m. to go to the hospital. But that night, the family rode until nearly 2 a.m.*

*"When we left my driveway, there was a full moon," Miles remembered. "I looked back and all you could see was his smile and his white teeth. He was known for his big smile.*

*Like the night before his surgery, even in the sickest of days, Kevin would find comfort riding his horse, Chance. Sometimes, Kevin would ride, but would get sick from the chemo he had taken that day, and would have to get off his horse. The horse would lay his head on Kevin's back, and when Kevin got up, the horse would kiss him on the jaw, Miles said.*

*"The day he died, that horse knew. He paced up and down the fence line all day," she said.*

*Kevin's love for Chance and images of his happier times are preserved on the family's quilts--like the picture of Kevin and his friends strumming guitars.*

*"He had a dream to be in a band," Linda Mattingly said. Prior to his death, the family had a benefit dance for Kevin. For two hours, Kevin played with the band. "His dream came true," she said.*

*The first quilt has mostly pictures of Kevin as a young man. Linda Mattingly made that one for herself. The second one has pictures of Kevin when he was younger, surrounded by his family. The quilt was made for Miles' birthday. A third will be a gift to Kevin's other sister, Shari Hall. (This quilt has since been finished.)*

*Linda Mattingly quietly worked on the first quilt without her daughters knowing. As she completed each of the 25 squares, she took them and laid them on Kevin's bed. The way the pieces fell ended up as the final design for the quilt.*

*"I cried and cried," Miles said after she saw the quilt for the first time. "With everything we do with him, it's a happy time, but we cry too."*

*Kevin's sister Shari said if Kevin were around to see the quilts, he would be happy, but a bit humbled.*

*"In a way, he'd be shy, but at the same time, he would be proud," Linda Mattingly said. Both Karen and Shari began to laugh when they thought how he would react. "One thing he'd say is, "Momma, that's wild."*

*Putting together the Quilts was a part of the healing process for Linda Mattingly.*

*“When you do something like this, it helps you and you don’t sit around and cry all the time,” Linda said.*

*For the family, the quilts are a way to share their memories and love of Kevin with others. “There’s not a day goes by that we don’t laugh about something he said or did or cry about something he didn’t get to do. I show the quilts to people and they think it’s the neatest thing that ever was.”*

Kevin’s website is  
<http://members.fortunecity.com/kevingmattingly/index.html>

**Kevin’s symbols are a horse and a guitar.**

**Paul and Claudia Grammatico’s son, Paul (4-20-73), was killed by a drunk driver, 5-16-99.**

Claudia sent this email:

*Hi All,*

*Just wanted all of you to know how the story ripples.*

*I was at St. Mary's last week for the health fair. A variety of health care professionals were there to teach the boys about their health. We had set up a table for the Gift of Life for teachers, social workers, and the boys. Joy worked the table to answer the questions. As a matter of fact, Ellen Kaplan, the principal of the public school 256Q on the premises of St Mary's signed her license as an example to the boys and educators.*

*A young man, 16 years old, named Christopher came to my table. He said he wished he lived in Grammatico Hall. I asked him why. He said last year he was dying in Mt Sinai Hospital and received a liver transplant and that Dr Sukuru Emre saved his life. Dr Sukuru was honored with me at the TRIO dinner dance. How's that for a circle!*

*The principal went on to tell us that he was very intelligent. His mother had beaten him several times and as a result he had liver damaged. She is presently in jail. He is living at St Mary's because home is not safe.*

*To meet him is a miracle. He will be writing an essay on The Gift of Life for me. It was very touching and proof positive of the ripple. To think a child would need a transplant not because of an illness but because of a beating!*

*He requested a copy of my song and I gave him the CD and I told him Delisco would perform it 'Live' at the dinner dance.*

*Some story, a story of Hope and Healing and Tenacity...  
On this journey one never knows who they are going to meet or change that  
will make a difference...  
Blessings & Peace, Claudia*

Claudia sent this lament:

### **5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 5/16**

**I leave Paul's empty room.  
So sorrowful the thought of Paul's Life as finished & unfulfilled.  
It is intolerable & incomprehensible the brutality of the mystery  
that I will not See, Feel, Smell or Embrace my Child on this earth.  
The thought can never be grasped!**

*However, I live a 'New Life' I could never imagine.  
I enter the 5th Anniversary of the Death of Paul.  
My heart is awed by his 'absence' as I move with passion against this mighty wind.  
Paul's Life is Transformed into New Life.  
A Life with God and his Recipients which is forever new and open.*

**Paul is not in my life that I could physically touch him like new spring flowers.  
Paul was not "revived",  
nor was he "resuscitated",  
nor was he "restored."  
Rather, Paul comes to Life 'Raised' in Song.....  
Paul's death is a Renovated Sanctuary.**

**Paul has entered into a *new mode of existence* with Organ Donation.  
The Gift of Life breaks through death's bonds when a Life is Saved.  
Brain dead becomes *Brainwave*  
as the Unselfish Gift is Being Wired for Miracles!  
*The Gift of Life is 'Glorified Transformation!'*  
How Mighty the Majesty of a Donor Hero!**

**I walk the walk & talk of the Cross.  
Thus I am more open to what transforms.  
Yesterday when Paul was killed,  
I was crucified.  
Yesterday, when Paul died,  
I returned to life with him in a simple proclaimed "YES."  
Yesterday, I watched my Son/Sun be buried.  
Today, I Rise with him and Dance to his Song!**

⊗ Paul's grave is a sad site/sight,

**but it is empty and open-ended!**

*It is open to possibilities beyond my wildest imaginings!*

**The juxtaposition of Lifting the Cross and being Lifted!**

*I Proclaim My Accomplishment of “Survivor’s Pride.”! ☺*

*claudia grammatico*

**Paul’s symbol is a butterfly.**

**Barbara Barth’s son, Willy (9-30-65), died as a result of  
AIDS, 9-11-94.**

Barbara sent a letter and poem that Willy wrote on Valentine’s Day, 1994:

*It’s Sunday morning and I’m sitting here with my beloved dog, Willy’s dog, trying to get started with the day. I usually try to find something to read to feed my soul. Up popped your note to me with a beautiful thought about the spirit.*

*I belong to Elaine Stillwell’s Compassionate Friends chapter. I have not been there though since last September. I had the poems made for everyone to give out for Willy’s anniversary date 9-11-94.*

*I must tell you I am very blessed. I have a wonderful daughter, son-in-law and three beautiful grandchildren, Karl (7), Allegra Sky (5) and Willy (3). They live fairly close so I see them once or twice a month.*

*When you’re running on the beach  
Or dancing in the sun  
Remember my face  
And we shall be one.*

*I was born to bring joy  
And laughter, not tears  
You may cry a little  
But surrender the fear.*

*I will be surrounded by*

*The angels above  
They are beautiful, but  
Not the only ones I love.*

*I wanted to see my family grow  
This I will see  
That, you should know.*

*I will live in you all  
Not in a dream  
An inspiring angel  
This is my call.*

*I never gained in material wealth  
Oh the treasures I had  
I gave of myself.*

*I felt love my whole  
Life through  
Now feel mine  
Believe this true.*

Willy was the youngest fashion editor for GQ magazine.

**Willy's symbols are blackbirds.**

**Johnny (2-20-71), son of Kenneth & Brenda Osborne, died  
in an auto accident, 5-14-02.**

Brenda wrote this shortly after Johnny's death:

*My little one, my baby, my own—the words resonate in my mind and heart.  
I was the mother of two and now I'm the mother of one. How can this be?*

*I can't ever remember not wanting to be a mother. I babysat as a young  
girl, preparing for the day I'd have my own babies. At fifteen, I met a wonderful  
young man, my future husband, Kenneth Wray Osborne. We began dating and  
married on my seventeenth birthday. Four years into our marriage, I became  
pregnant. We were so thrilled, but five and half months into my pregnancy, we lost*

*our baby. The hurt and depression that set in were heart wrenching. God blessed us two years later, in 1969; with a beautiful little girl we named Kelli Renee. She was the joy of our lives. My doctor told us that due to the difficult birth, I would not have any more children. God must have smiled that day because twenty-one months later, in 1971, our son Johnny Wray was born. He was named for my father John, my brother Johnny Rex, and his daddy Kenneth Wray. Johnny was the only grandson on my side of the family, so you can imagine the attention he received. Like his sister, Johnny was full of joy and laughter. He never met a stranger and never wanted to turn away animals. He once found a stray puppy on the church steps and brought her home.*

*Before Kelli and Johnny were old enough to go to school, Kenneth's parents or mine cared for them so I could work. I taught second grade at G.F. Johnson Elementary School in rural Pike County. One day after school, I went to pick them up and found Johnny on the roof with my father, fixing shingles. He could talk his grandparents into anything.*

*Time passed so quickly while Johnny was in school. We rode to and from school together each day, his talking never ceased from the time we left until we got to our destination. When we arrived at school, he would run ahead to greet his teachers and friends. When Johnny was in the second grade, I was his teacher. He asked before the school year started what he should call me. I said for him to decide. He chose to call me "Mrs. Osborne" so the other children wouldn't know I was his mother. He kept his secret for nearly two months. Then one day he slipped up and called me "Mommy." The cat was out of the bag, so it was "Mommy" the remainder of the year.*

*Johnny's dad owned and operated a radio station as Johnny was growing up. Johnny's personality was well suited for radio. From the time he realized what a microphone was, he began interviewing family and friends at special functions. He was preparing for his life's vocation in radio. While Johnny was in high school, he worked at the radio station when he had time off from school. He had a real knack for talking with people and a voice that was matchless in Pike County. He continued working for his dad and uncle while he was in college. Johnny continued to work in radio until a few months before his death. Kenneth sold his interest in the radio station (WZLK) to his brother, Lonnie Osborne. Lonnie still plays commercials Johnny made as a tribute to his memory.*

*On May 14, 2002, a dear friend of Kenneth's and mine, Pat Mullins, had a doctor's appointment. I decided to go with her since her husband had passed away just three weeks earlier from cancer. (We were still grieving for her husband, Sam.) Kenneth was home getting ready to go to a church meeting that afternoon when he heard police and ambulance sirens passing our house a little past 4:30 pm. I called my husband about an hour later to let him know I'd be*

home soon, and he said he was leaving for his meeting. I arrived home about 7:25 pm. The telephone rang and my mother-in-law wanted to know if I had heard where the police and ambulance had gone. I told her I'd just arrived home and had not heard them. For some unknown reason, I got back in the car and drove up the road about half a mile. I had never done anything like that before. Traffic was being stopped and re-routed. When I pulled up, a lady who knew me from school asked me to pull off the road. Kenneth's cousin, who worked for the fire department, approached my car and told me the fire department couldn't give out any information on the wreck, but the police would come talk to me. At this point, my mind refused to digest the obvious. The coroner came and knelt down by my car window. He wanted me to describe my son and the type of truck he drove. No one would confirm that it was Johnny who was in the accident. They just said, "Go to the hospital."

Johnny died at 4:25 pm and wasn't brought to the hospital until 10:00pm. The police said they had to reconstruct the accident scene. Only someone who has lost a child can even begin to understand the many stages of grief we are passing through.

It wasn't until later that we found out more details about the accident. Johnny's wreck happened in front of a minister's house. The minister's daughter, a nurse, was visiting her parents. She ran to Johnny's aid barefooted through shattered glass and never got a cut. When this nurse realized she couldn't help our son, she called her father over to pray with Johnny. He told Johnny he was going to pray that God would heal him, but if not, that God would grant him entrance in the gates of heaven. Rev. Vance said after he prayed, Johnny sighed and his body relaxed. He said there was such peace in the truck then. We'll always be grateful that God gave Johnny those few precious minutes to repent. Johnny lived three to four minutes after the completion of the prayer before he passed away. The minister who prayed with our son was also the minister who married Johnny and his former wife, Kim, a few years before. (Coincidence? Maybe.) This leaves us with the hope we'll see Johnny again someday.

Nearly 800 people attended Johnny's funeral; many of whom knew him from the radio as "Johnny O." I can't think of Thanksgiving or Christmas without feelings of despair. How do you get through the birthdays and holidays? I miss his coming through the door and yelling for "Mama Squirrel," his pet name for me, and him leaving notes for me signed, "Max and me." (Max is our huge black chow that Johnny loves so much.) Like every mother, I miss his voice; his touch, his smell, and his "I love you."

Recently Johnny's cousin, Johnda Smith, called to tell me about two dreams she had. In the first dream, the family was together for Christmas. She said Johnny came through the door with his hair and face wet. He looked at her and

said, "I'm clean now." The other dream she had was of the family on vacation in Florida. In this dream, Johnny was a small boy and he came running through the motel room door. Again, his hair and face were wet. He said, "I'm clean now." How much those words, "I'm clean now," have meant to us. For, you see, the last year of Johnny's life had been mixed with drugs.

How do we get through the days and long nights? We do it with God's help, our daughter Kelli, and her two beautiful children, Lauren and John Michael. Our family and church friends have been a blessing.

The day Johnny died, Kelli was crying and Lauren, who loved Johnny so much, wanted to know why. Kelli told Lauren that Uncle Johnny had died. "Mama, Uncle Johnny is healed by the stripes of Jesus." Maybe one day, with God's grace, the rest of this family will be healed, also.

We've chosen the butterfly as our son's symbol because we feel he's now flying freely with the angels. Since Johnny passed away, one of the lights in the yellow bathroom has taken on a life of its own. It goes on and off as it pleases. I like to think my fun-loving son is letting us know he's near.

Johnny's cousin, Lora Renee Rutherford, wrote this poem:

*It is so easy just to sit alone  
And merely wonder "why?"  
To ponder what we could have changed  
Had time not passed us by.*

*But Johnny would not want that—  
He would try to dry our tears,  
He would silence all the "What might have been."  
He would quiet all our fears.*

*All of Johnny's family,  
Loved Johnny Wray so much;  
We have a multitude of memories  
To which we will forever clutch.*

*So long as we always remember,  
Johnny's life is sure to go on,  
Through remembrances and photographs,  
Our Johnny will never be gone.*

*We can no longer look out for Johnny—  
It is his time to watch over us.  
Now he is reunited with so many he once loved—  
Such as his Grandpa Thomas, Mamaw Cora, and Little Larry, up above.*

*Now we just have to think about  
All the good times with Johnny we had;  
And let our sadness and our pain  
Turn to happiness in their stead.*

*We have to think about his silly grin;  
And the way that he could make  
All of your problems disappear—  
One look and smile was all it would take.*

*We have to think about Bo-Bo,  
The teddy bear with whom he shared his bed;  
And how he still looked like an innocent little boy  
When Scooby Doo came on the TV set.*

*Johnny loved to play with Max,  
His dog, all shaggy and black—  
He would stand outside for hours  
Throwing the ball for Max to bring back.*

*Johnny loved Bobby Labonte,  
Who drives Nascar's number eighteen.  
How he loved to watch the races  
On his mom and dad's big screen.*

*As a DJ Johnny was known  
To his listeners as "Johnny O."  
He loved working for his dad and uncle—  
Speaking to others through their radios.*

*Johnny loved his family—  
His dad, Mama Squirrel, and all the rest.  
For each day we spent with Johnny,  
Each of us is deeply blessed.*

*What appears for us a sunset,  
For Johnny is a brand new dawn.  
There is no such thing as gone forever—  
Our Johnny will always live on.*

**Johnny's symbols are butterflies, squirrels, and Max, his dog.**

**David Leon McLaghlin (4-13-85), son of Lee Ann Lofton,  
died from Leukemia, 4-21-01.**

Lee Ann emailed to encourage fellow travelers to view Leon's new website-  
his graduation website:

<http://terriscustoms.homestead.com/GRADUATION2004FORMAMMA.COM>

This was written by the family and was in the newspaper for Leon's class' graduation:

*All parents look forward to their child's graduation from high school. So did we, but our son left too soon to see this glorious day. But we know he is in a better place in Heaven for higher learners. We miss you always, Leon, and we always will, and think of you each and every day of our lives, and love you. Every prayer I pray and every day I breathe and every night I go to sleep and awake, I will think of you and miss you, baby!*

*Congratulations to the class of "2004" at Goldsboro High and everywhere today. Be blessed and follow your dreams. If you shall fall, remember, pick yourself back up and try again.*

*We love you and David is so proud of you all. This year he will be graduating in "Heaven" with our Lord and Savior and all his angel friends. But he will be with you on this wonderful honored day in our hearts and minds.*

*Mama will always be proud of you, my handsome, sweet, beautiful son! Congratulations, David Leon.*

*Love, Hugs, and Kisses. The class of 2004 we love you and miss you!*

*Leon, tell your grandfather, my dad, the late Clarence Baker, that I love him and think of him every day of my life.*

*Your Mom, Lee Ann, Family, Friends & Classmates.*

**Leon's symbols are a basketball and music.**

**Scott (10-24-77), son of Howard and Sandy Graham, took his own life, 4-28-95.**

On the anniversary of Scott's death, Sandy received a great gift:

*I took the day off work last Wednesday, April 28, 2004, the anniversary of Scott's death. I was outside working in the garden and a F-16 flew over. I stood up so I could follow it until it was out of my sight. Just as I stood up and sighted it again, it tipped its wings as to say hello. My Angel was in that cock pit doing what he always wanted to do, fly those F-16s!*

**Scott's symbols are a dolphin and an F-16 fighter plane.**

**Chad and Christy Fitzpatrick's daughter, Jordyn (3-30-98), died from Acute Myeloid Leukemia, 5-8-00.**

The family would like for you to visit Jordyn's new website that has won many awards:

[www.geocities.com/ourangeljordyn/Welcome](http://www.geocities.com/ourangeljordyn/Welcome)

**Ron and Maria Faller's son, Christopher (5-7-90), died from viral complications from piggyback heart transplants, 3-24-98.**

Marie wants you to view the website for Christopher's 14<sup>th</sup> birthday. Be sure to look at the photo book as the pages turn.

[www.geocities.com/legobeaverchris/14bday.html](http://www.geocities.com/legobeaverchris/14bday.html)

**Christopher's symbols are legos, beavers and 2 hearts that are entwined.**

**Chrissie (11-14-86), daughter of David and Kathie Carrigan, died from suicide-passive hanging, 12-6-01.**

Kathie sent the following email:

*We have the web site below in memory of Chrissie and we have a scholarship fund at her high school. In the year 2012 we hope to open the Chrissie Mariposa Cottage. This will be a treatment center (live-in and out-patient) for young people with eating disorders. We hope to make it as homey as possible for the people. We are going to start a foundation that will pick up where the insurance stops. We will also use the foundation to keep the scholarship going. We will be having a yearly run to raise the funds for the foundation and scholarship.*

*Kathie C.*

*Mom of Chrissie*

*11-14-86 to 12-06-01*

*depression, disassociative identity disorder and anorexia*

*[www.angelfire.com/amiga2/ourangelboy2/chrissie.html](http://www.angelfire.com/amiga2/ourangelboy2/chrissie.html)*

*suicide- passive hanging*

*Lacey Girl (Chrissie's 4-legged friend & companion) 5-15-97 to 2-14-04*

*I held an Angel in my arms now I hold one in my heart.*

**Chrissie's symbols are butterfly, angel, buffalo, Dalmatian, and Tigger.**

**David and Cherie Leatherman's son, Joshua (6-17-96), died from an accidental strangulation (between tree limbs), 3-27-02.**

David emailed:

*If you want to see some photos of Joshua and read a little about him and what happened, Cherie wrote an article for a newsletter/magazine that supports kids born with esophageal atresia. Joshua was born with this birth defect. It had nothing to do with his death though, but the group published the story. The story and pictures can be viewed at the website for the group. It is [www.eatef.org](http://www.eatef.org) At the site, there is a tab at the top that says "journal," click on the tab and go to fall 2003 journal. Adobe hardware should download the whole journal. There is a small introduction into Joshua's story by the editor on page 2, Joshua's story follows.*

**Joshua's symbols are crayons.**

**Tom and Kathy Hinton's son, Joe (11-28-84), was killed in an auto accident 12-20-03.**

Joe was planning to attend Cumberland College this fall. After his death, Tom and Kathy visited the campus. Kathy wrote:

*It is so good to hear from you- a fellow traveler.*

*Tom and I just finished a grief class, "A time to mourn;" a worthy time and place. It is a loss to leave it – only a 6-week class.*

*We are attending Compassionate Friends. Any support for this most difficult and strong grief is so needed. A mother's heart requires so much, Dinah. Yet, we give it so freely; so willingly; without regard for it's risks.*

*This brokenness that insists on having it's way has given time or space a new dimension.*

*My reliance on Christ's mercy is with me every hour.*

*I long for the comfort of assurance for Joe's soul's protection.*

*My greatest privilege now is the honor of Joe and the grief we must pay tribute to. Do young they are.*

*I am grateful to write, to share, to lament. It will only be four months the 20<sup>th</sup> of April, only four – we miss Joe so. It remains foggy yet. Surreal - not yet fully true. Yet, the mourning so strong.*

*May the conference bless all as I am sure it will.*

**Brent (3-27-85), son of Bob and Tina Davidson, died 5-4-04.  
Brent was a student here at Cumberland.**

Tina shared her thoughts:

*We are still a little numb about the whole ordeal at this time, probably because it still feels like he is at college and not come home for the summer yet. I know we will never fully know God's plan but I am at peace with my faith in knowing that this is all a part of His plan. I know Brent made a difference somehow in the people he touched while on this earth in some way, and it is a part of the great mystery of faith.*

Tina shared her Mother's Day "gifts" from Brent:

*I got probably the best gift of all from Brent for Mother's Day and I will be able to look at it every year. I went through his Day Planner when we got home from bringing his things home from college and on Sunday, May 2nd he had written in bubble letters across the entire day "ONE MORE WEEK UNTIL MOTHERS DAY".*

Tina received a "gift" for me:

*I just wanted to drop you a note because I have been reading the books and thinking a lot about you. Also because I have been getting so many signs from Brent and I think your son as well.*

*I believe they could be in cahoots. One day I will have to tell you all the things that have been going on, but I will tell you the one that happened this Sunday (May 23<sup>rd</sup>, which was the date Young Jim was buried).*

*I went with another mother to our girls' soccer games (2) in Tipp City, Ohio. Before the second game, while the girls were warming up, we were still sitting in the parking lot waiting to walk back to the field since we had almost a half hour before the game was to start. The only people at this park were there for our game and one other soccer game. Well, two dads had brought one of those big*

*silk/cotton kites to fly and they were right in front of our car in the grass. My friend said "what is that supposed to be?" I said at first it looked like a dragon's body with wings, then I said "oh my gosh, it's a Pegasus." What are the odds that someone would have a Pegasus kite at that park on that day? I immediately thought of your son and my son, because I had already had two other signs from Brent this past weekend.*

**Brent's symbol is a soccer ball.**

**Bonnie McClelland's son, Tim (7-9-84) died from hanging himself, 1-21-02.**

Bonnie sent a fascinating story on how she stopped smoking:

*It has been a few weeks since Mother's Day and it has taken this long to have the meaning of what happened settle in.*

*I found Tim hung. He had been dead over 8 hours so it was extremely grotesque.*

*The sheriff's dept made me stand on my front porch as they investigated. They had accused me of hanging my only child. I called my girlfriend to be with me. When she got there I ask for a cigarette. Me the natural health freak. The last person you would ever expect to see smoking. Tim smoked. My mom smoked. She died 19 years before Tim. My dad smoke he died 2 months after Tim. I would walk around saying to Tim "look you left your nasty habit with me, you dog you". I quite smoking 15 month after Tim's death. Then Brandon Pinkelton died 4 months later by hanging. I made it through all that the hospital and conducting his service and doing his eulogy and the pain in all theses kids all over again for there 4th time.*

*Then a month later 3 kids I know attempted and I lit up.*

*Last mother's day Tim had sent me a spectacular sign I will share again if you wish. This year I kept saying I don't know how you are going to top last year Bud ( one of many of his nick names) you just better. I had 2 of my friend over for mom's day we went to a tea house came to my house and were out sitting on the back porch. I was smoking a cigarette when it went flying out of my hand and across the porch. We all were shocked cause my hand never mover. For the next 3 days I had my cigarette knocked out of my hand or the lighter blown out before I could light up. On the 3rd day I was sitting on my porch smoking when, I don't know how else to describe this, it felt like a bubble popped in my brain. I looked*

*down at my hand and thought "what the hell am I doing with a cigarette" It is like part of my brain that shut down when I found Tim is back. I put out that cigarette and have not even had the desire to smoke since.*

*Not only have I quite smoking I hit stage 5 in Grief Acceptances of what has occurred I also have had peace return to my life. I am cleaning my house an organizing all my papers besides Yellow Ribbon I teach 3 massage and a colon therapy courses. Not for a nanosecond do I not still long for my Tim back in his earth suite I simply have come to terms.*

*WOW the gift of my health back both my parents died by cigarette related cancer. I feel so much physically as well as emotional better. I know Tim saved my life again I see this as a sign.*

*Bonnie Tim's mom*

*7/9/84-1/21/02*

*hanged found by me my only child*

*"Learn from this and help each other"*

*Ps in Tim's suicide note.*

**Tim's symbol is a large Z.**

**Love starts with a smile, grows with a kiss, and ends with a tear.**

**Fellow Travelers are the siblings God forgot to give us.**

**When it hurts to look back, and you're afraid to look ahead, you can look beside you and your Fellow Travelers will be there.**

To end the newsletter, there always has to be something about chocolate. Here it is:

**WHAT CAN I EAT?**

Can't eat beef... mad cow.

Can't eat chicken... bird flu;

Can't eat eggs... again, bird flu.

Can't eat pork... fears that bird flu will infect piggies.

Can't eat fish... heavy metals in the waters have poisoned their meat.  
Can't eat fruits and veggies..... insecticides and herbicides....

Hmmmm! I believe that leaves chocolate!

**If you are a bereaved parent and/or would like more information  
about Lamentations, please e-mail:**

[dinah@cumberlandcollege.edu](mailto:dinah@cumberlandcollege.edu)