
LAMENTATIONS

Issue 88

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

November-December 2004

Dear Fellow Travelers,

The holidays are drawing near and it is time for you and your family to decide how to best observe them. This is from the newsletter, "The HOPE Line," by Margaret H. Gerner, M.S.W.:

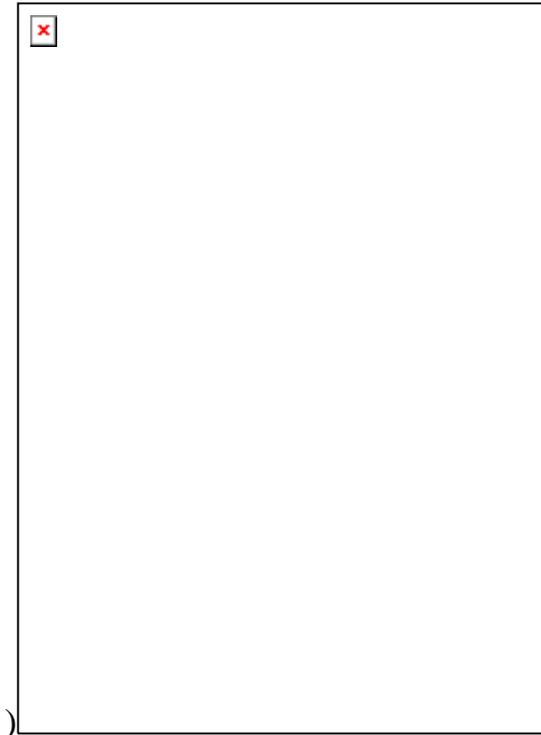
No magic answers exist that will make the holidays good for you this year, especially if this is the first holiday season since your loved one died. These times will probably be difficult no matter how you prepare. However, having ideas and plans worked out in advance will give you some sense of control. Listed below are a few ideas and suggestions that have helped others. Choose the ones that might work for you.

Share your ideas, feelings and thoughts about the holidays with other family members and ask them to share theirs with you. Maybe together you can work out a holiday plan that will please all of you.

Know that, as a grieving person, you have physical and emotional limitations. Evaluate your priorities and decide what you want to do and what you are capable of doing. Share and delegate holiday tasks. You may ask: "Do we stay home, or do we 'run away' to a different environment this year?" "Who can handle the family dinner, or should we go out?" "Will I send Christmas cards this year, or not?" (If you decide to, tuck in a funeral service card for those who don't know about your loved one's death.) "What about gift giving?" "This year, do I really want to (fill in your own task)?" You will probably have neither the interest nor the energy for the usual holiday preparations. That's okay; maybe next year will be different. (If you need to give gifts, gift certificates are always appreciated and you won't have to shop in the stores and hear the music and see the excitement of those who are not experiencing your sorrow.)

Don't be afraid to make changes or create new traditions. Open gifts at a different time than usual. Have dinner at a different time, or have a buffet instead of a sit-down dinner. Have a white tree instead of the usual green one, or maybe no tree at all this year. Attend a different church. Attend a different service. Light a special candle on the dining room table. Have a special candle that anyone can light when they are thinking of the loved one. Rather than not hanging a stocking for your loved one, hang a stocking for him and others. Put a special Christmas tree on her grave. Go as a family and decorate it. (The

first Christmas after Young Jim's death, our family got together in Young Jim's room and we decorated a tree with his things. As each item was placed on the tree, we shared memories of him and it was such a loving time for each of us. I have this tree in his room each year at Christmas and it is always a way for us to share Young Jim with others who visit our home.



Be careful of *shoulds*. Do what is most helpful for you and your family. If a situation looks especially difficult over the holidays, don't do it. Some people fear crying in public, especially at a church service. It's better not to push the tears down at any time. Be gentle with yourself, and try not to expect too much. Worrying about crying is an additional burden. If you let go and cry, you probably will feel better. Your tears shouldn't ruin the day for other family members, but will provide them with the same freedom.

Holidays often magnify feelings of loss of a loved one. Experiencing the sadness that comes is important and natural. To block such feelings is unhealthy. Keep the positive memory of your loved one alive. Be aware that other members of your family are experiencing grief too, even though they may not show it or talk about it.

Forgive yourself ahead of time for the enjoyment you are sure to have at some time during the holidays. Most grievers feel guilty about this. Are you really betraying your loved one by enjoying some small moments? No, they would want you to.

Ask someone you can count on to be available to you in case you "go to pieces" despite all the good plans. Be prepared for the stinging pain in your heart when you hear her favorite Christmas song. Do something for someone else. Focusing on others for part of the holidays will give you a respite from your pain, and help another at the same time.

Often, after the first year, people in your life may expect you to be “over it.” We are never “over it,” but the experience of many bereaved is that, eventually, they enjoy the holidays again. Hold on to HOPE.

Don't forget: Anticipation of the holiday is always worse than the holiday itself.

This has been a very difficult decision to make and it is with a burdened heart that I share my decision, early with you, my fellow travelers. Since 1992 I have been writing LAMENTATIONS for all of us to know each other's children and their symbols and to share our feelings. Since last December I have been doing everything on my own, in addition to all the many activities I need to do for the College, and I have finally accepted the fact that I can no longer do everything I need or want to do. I continue to struggle with Fibromyalgia and realize I can't do everything I could do in my younger years. Sitting at the computer or writing at a desk makes the Fibromyalgia worse. This next **J.I.M.'s Conference** will be the last one I will be able to have, but I pray that there will be someone or some group that will continue to have the conference. I plan to continue the website since it is a place for us to share our children and a place for them to be remembered.

Because this will be the last conference, I hope as many of you as possible will be able to come. I know your children, and I want to know you also. I hope you will continue to visit the two Domes, J.I.M.'s Commons, and The Christmas Box Angel here on the Cumberland College Campus. These memorials are in memory of all our children. The breath-taking **Window of Hope** by Bill Rogers will be dedicated as well as the **Tree of Life** at this last conference, June 3-4, 2005. I hope all of our children will be represented on the **Tree of Life**. Each time I walk into the Grace Crum Rollins Fine Arts Building, (where the tree will be placed and dedicated June 4, 2005) I will be able to point to each leaf and say these are our children and we are joined together in memory as I believe our children are joined together in remembering us. There are still places for bricks in the Commons. If you are interested in purchasing a brick and/or a leaf, in memory of your child(ren) or someone else's child(ren), the forms are on the website.

This decision was not made in haste, but through much prayer and deliberation. I feel at peace with the decision and I feel that Young Jim understands. He has been my strength and guide through these years. I promise to stay in touch and I hope you will stay in touch with me and continue to share your children.

Those of you who made reservations at the Cumberland Inn will need to make them once again. Their computer crashed and the back-up was infected, so they lost everything. That number is 1-800-315-0286.

Complete information about the conference will be mailed to you in April, 2005 and you will be notified when the information will be on the website. Once again you will be able to register via the website or mail.

You are my fellow travelers and I continue to need your prayers and support. I hope each of you will be able to attend this last conference as we Join In Memory, June 3-4, 2005.

May you feel the presence of your loved ones through the holiday season. Let me know how you are remembering them this year. I will put them on the website so other parents can read them and get ideas on ways they can remember their child. It is up to up to make sure they are not forgotten. As we plan our remembrances, it will give each of us something to look forward to and to work toward during these tough holidays.

With a burdened heart,
Your fellow traveler,

dinah@cumberlandcollege.edu

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

Grief Grafts

Terry and DeeDee Potter's daughter, Lyndel (4-2-85), was killed in an auto accident, 7-10-02.

DeeDee tells of her "sabbatical:"

I took a much-needed year off of work and am just now returning. It's been real nice to catch up on all of the e-mails I've missed. Thank goodness my coworkers love me enough to have me back and not to have deleted all of my emails. I'm sorry we missed the picnic again this year. We had planned to come but the time conflicted with our family vacation. This was the first vacation we've had since Lyndel's death. It went pretty well. I heard from Rhoda Anderson that it was wonderful. Hopefully, we will get to attend next summer.

Well, as I look back, I think I must have been crazy. I opened a nursery (baby) furniture store. I saturated myself with work. I tried not to give myself too much time to think about Lyndel's accident.

By the way, she was killed in a single car accident on her way home from getting a haircut. I'll tell you more about that in a minute. I decided to follow my dreams and become an entrepreneur.

It was so good for me to have something to pour myself into. Some people say that you can't run from it, but I'm here to tell you that you can to an extent. I only allowed myself to be consumed by Lyndel's accident in healthy doses. Well, most of the time anyway! Occasionally it would catch up with me and I would drown in it for a few days. As time has gone by I have found that it slips up less often but it is equally as painful. My business was a great success and I enjoyed it so much. I adopted a baby girl in November so I decided to sell the store. McKinlee has been such a blessing to us, she brings sunshine back into our lives. She certainly doesn't take the place of Lyndel, but she has made her own place in our hearts. The store is still doing well I hear. And so, I decided to return to

my old job a couple of days a week to prevent me from becoming too depressed over the long haul.

Lyndel's accident was a freak accident ----- the police think she may have fallen off of the edge of the highway and over-corrected, causing her car to slide across the road in front of an older model truck. The truck hit her in the driver's door. The speed of Lyndel's car and the truck were estimated at 40 mph. She died upon impact. Although she died, I still believe that God took very good care of her during the accident. She died as a result of a broken neck but she didn't have any other injuries visible. She was a beautiful girl both inside and out. She was a Christian and it showed! There were over 2000 people at her funeral and we come from a small town of about 6000. She touched so many lives in her short time on earth, we are still hearing stories about things she did that we didn't even know about. A classmate of Lyndel's recently had a book of short stories published and the first chapter was about Lyndel. There have been songs, poems and personal narratives written about her ----- it's been such a blessing to know what an impact she made. It was truly an honor and to be her mother. Well, I could go on and on about my girl, but if I 'm going to get her story written I'd better get to it.

I believe you are right when you say our children are together and I believe they find ways to bring us together. There certainly is a strong bond between mothers who have lost children. I've never really figured it out, but it seems to be comforting to be with someone who's been where you have been (or still are).

Lyndel was baptized into Christ on July 31,1994. She took her Christianity very seriously, working hard for the Lord both at church and elsewhere. Lyndel was a member of the youth group, taught Vacation Bible School, was in youth choir, went on missions trips to Mexico, and was a counselor at church camp.

Lyndel was an excellent student. She worked hard to maintain good grades. She was consistently on the honor roll.

Lyndel was an outstanding athlete. She cheered on a varsity squad which captured a national title two years in a row. Her expert gymnastic abilities greatly assisted in gaining the title. She also achieved great success on the softball field. She had the highest batting average on her team and played outstanding defense as a catcher. Lyndel earned the honor of being voted first team All County and Honorable Mention All State. She also earned the honor of being the only player from the fifteenth region to be selected to play in the East-West All Star Game. Lyndel always gave 110% to everything she did. She aspired to play collegiate softball. Lyndel was voted by her classmates to represent her class on the Varsity Court for three years and the Homecoming Court for five years.

Lyndel loved her family. She affectionately called Paul her Boy and often remarked that Joe was a HOTTIE. Her mother was her best friend; she often called her in the middle of the school day just to say hi. Lyndel wrapped herself around her daddy's little finger and tightened the hold just by saying "Doddie." She was very much in love with her boyfriend, Chad. They spent countless hours together playing ball and watching ESPN. Chad is a college baseball pitcher --- they were the perfect pitcher/catcher combination.

On July 10, 2002, Lyndel was killed instantly in a freak car accident. Although her life on earth was short, she had a huge impact on her family and community. It is for certain she accomplished more in seventeen years than some people do in a lifetime.

Lyndel's headstone reads, "The absence of her presence is everywhere;" truer words have never been spoken. This has recently been reflected in the book, Running for Redemption by Lance C. Huffman. The first story in Lance's book is entitled, "Memoriam Wrapped with a Purple Bow." The insightful tribute to Lyndel grew from the author's inability to express his feelings at the time of her death. Through words, he has been able to capture the essence of her spirit, keeping it forever alive for all of us through print.

Meet Lyndel--she was a beautiful young lady. She was 5'8" slim, but muscular, with beautiful blue eyes and golden blonde hair. When she smiled her whole face smiled! Lyndel had a wonderful personality---she was always happy and made everyone around her feel happy. She seemed to have a gift of making everyone feel as if they were special to her. No adjectives can describe the beauty of Lyndel, you just had to know her!

Lyndel's symbols are a butterfly, softball, purple rose and purple ribbon.

Steve & Ledecca McCoy's daughter, Sabrina (11-6-94), died 7-27-03.

Steve and Ledecca would like for you to get to know Sabrina by looking at her website: www.4stevemccoy.com

Sabrina's symbol is an angel.

Rick and Sherry Blevins' son, James (8-31-78), died as a result of diabetes, 3-26-02.

This is a letter Sherry wrote to her son:

My dearest son,

I have sat and sat thinking of your life; I'm going to try and put your life on paper to the best of my ability. As I sit here thinking about when I found out I was pregnant with you, not only myself but your dad were overjoyed with happiness. Another child in our lives; JoAnna was little but she understood that she was going to have a baby brother or sister. My pregnancy proceeded without any complications. We didn't know whether you would be a boy or a girl; however, we wanted a son.

Early in the evening on August 30, 1978, I knew I was going into labor, but I told your daddy to go on to work because I knew if I was in labor as long with you as I was JoAnna it would be a very long night. Surprisingly enough, things rushed forward fairly rapidly and I had to call your dad in from the rig. Once he got over to Mema's and Big Pa's I didn't want to go to the hospital; I wanted to wait a little while longer; finally, at 1:30 a.m. on 08-31-78 we made it to the hospital which was Golden Plains Community Hospital here in Borger.

You had other plans and were ready to get here. They prepared me and took me to the delivery room where you were born at 3:02 a.m. Dr. Ingham didn't even make it until you were already her, said he figured you were gonna be a hardheaded little girl and take your time. Oh my son, when I held you in my arms for the very first time, I thanked God for the miracle of your birth and that I now had a son and a daughter. Your daddy was so very proud, he just beamed with pride.

We hadn't chosen a name until then and we decided to name you James after your Big Pa and Irvin after your Little Pa. Your sister was so excited when Mema and Big Pa snuck her in my hospital room and she got to see you. James, you were such a good baby, carefree and so full of life; you brought laughter and sunshine to all you met.

I remember your first fall, I was scared you had really hurt yourself; however, you got up and kept on going. I think about all the firsts in your life; cutting teeth, crawling, standing, sitting, walking, all the things that all babies do. I wish I could have kept you safe from any harm that would come your way. You proceeded on a normal boy; you and your sister were so close; she adored you and you adored her; you were always best of friends.

Your first day of school, oh how I didn't want you to start school; my baby was growing up too fast. You always had lots of friends; seems like everybody you ever met; they liked you and you liked them. That was your nature. You acted so grown up, not wanting mom to make a fuss over you in front of your friends.

You were really attached to Mema, Big Pa, and Little Pa; I can still see Big Pa rocking you on his knee; you loved it. Big Pa got sick and passed away and you were so young; 5 1/2 years, but you acted like a grown man. I tried to shelter you from death, but you wanted to know everything. I remember when your dad died on 10-01-85; I was so proud of you because you were the one who tried to keep mom and sister together. I remember your little hand in mine. Such a young age to have been introduced to such tragedy in your life.

The years passed by all the time you were growing up to be a fine young man. In March of 1987 I began to notice some changes in you that were oh so familiar and I knew before we even went to the doctor that you, my son, were a juvenile diabetic. My world stopped and stood still that day in the doctor's office when we were told to immediately admit you to the hospital. I tried on the outside to be as brave as I could while on the inside I was dying. It seemed to me that I had lived with diabetes in my life forever, and now to know that my child would have to have daily injections, watch his diet, check his blood sugar, go to the doctor, etc; it was almost more than I could handle.

You had then and still have a dear friend, Chris Ford, who was with you from the time you went into the hospital until we lost you 2 years ago. His family had me teach them all they needed to know to be able to take care of you when you were over with them. You were so blessed by good friends; you had a way with people.

As your young years passed by, so did the relationship you shared with JoAnna; it pleased me so much to see the two of you as such good friends; oh, there were times that she got mad at you and you at her, but nothing ever came between the two of ya'll. She loved you unconditionally and she trusted in you and you in her.

Through the years you were developing into such a unique young man; I remember when you started shaving; some of those wild haircuts you and your friends gave each other. When you started playing little league softball and football; you were so proud and I was so proud of you. You made certain that you were not treated differently because of your diabetes. Basketball was your life, and you were good at it.

The first time you ended up in the emergency room because your blood sugar dropped too low, it was Ronnie and Steven who rushed over to tell me to get to the hospital; and when I stormed in, you were laying there like nothing had happened, but I saw the look in your eyes and I knew it had scared you as much as it had me.

You started to date and all the girls were crazy about you; I sure miss those talks where you would come wake me up at 3:00 or 4:00a.m. and say, "mom I need to talk." We had that kind of relationship. People were amazed that you confided in me some of the things that you did, but it was always that way; we had an understanding that I would listen always and you would always be open and honest with me. Thank you for that trust my son.

You came into me in the kitchen one evening and Jeremy and Wesley were with you; how the conversation started I don't really remember, but the words you spoke caused my heart to almost stop, remember those words, "I will never live to see 24 years old." All I could do was turn around and respond telling you not to ever say that again; you looked at me and said, "It's true mom, I just know it's true."

You were becoming quite a man; I was so proud of you when you graduated from Champs, my son had his high school diploma. You weren't sure what you wanted to do and you were still a little young; at 16 1/2 years old and out of high school you had a lot to think about.

I remember whenever Rick and I told you we were going to get married, your reply was "that's cool mom." You had a relationship with Rick like no other relationship I've seen between a stepfather and stepson. The two of you were buddies, friends, you trusted each other, and you loved each other. You would tell Rick things you wouldn't tell me and to this day Rick has never told me anything you told him not to. To Rick, you were his son James.

You left here and moved to Oklahoma with your sister for a little over a year; I was devastated; but I must say she took good care of you. When you came back in September 2001, I saw changes in you that I couldn't put my finger on but they were there. We spent lots of time together and talked; we became closer than we ever had before. I wonder were you trying to prepare me for what was about to happen?

I saw you on Saturday March 2, 2002 and you seemed all right; then Sunday night we got that horrible phone call that told us to get to the hospital immediately because you were fixing to be airlifted to Amarillo. I lost it; I couldn't comprehend what had happened, had you been in a fight, a car wreck, what had happened? You were in a diabetic coma. Oh James, when I looked at you and took your hand in mine I knew in my heart that you would never come home again. A mother knows. Your life flashed before my very eyes; I then was told that David, your cousin, was one of the ambulance drivers who picked you up and through tears he told me about them arriving where you were at. How could I your mother not sense something was wrong that day? What happened between Saturday night

and Sunday night? Nobody but you and God know that. I told you, son, I don't know what happened and it's not important to me to know; what is important is to get you well. I flew with you to Amarillo; they worked on you the entire time; you were admitted to CCU in DKA with pneumonia, and at that time you had a seizure, then you went into cardiac arrest. After 30 minutes they brought you back. Over the next week you went into cardiac arrest once again and they brought you back. They put you on life support; I had to keep you alive until your sister could get here from Oklahoma. Oh son, friends poured into the hospital; I've never seen anything like it; you were so loved.

The doctors got your diabetes somewhat controlled, but you still wouldn't come out of the coma, they asked me if they could do an MRI and EEG on you; I paced the floor waiting for the doctor; he came in and told me you had extensive brain damage; swelling in your brain and it was not going to be getting any better; you were in a vegetative state. Your sister arrived and, son, she was devastated. I sat down with her, with Rick and with your Little Pa and we began to try and decide what to do next. I sat with you day and night, only leaving the room when visitors showed up. Your doctor came back to me on March 22, 2002, and told me he wanted to do another EEG, I agreed. That night the results were in and the swelling in your brain was worse. I had to make a decision, take you home, send you to a nursing home, or put you in the in house Hospice. The four of us sat and talked and I told your doctor to call Hospice, but I would not let them take you off life support until Monday because your friends needed a chance to tell you bye.

Over the weekend over 100 of your friends came to see you and I told them what was going to be done. Everybody agreed and everybody that could said they would be back on Monday early, they wanted to be with you. The doctors had told us you might die as soon as life support was removed. After talking with the doctors, I told them that your sister and I would be in the room with you when they removed life support. At first they said no and I argued and told them she and I had had you for 23 years, and I was there when you breathed your first breath and I was going to be there when you breathed your last; they finally consented.

The weekend was hard. I would sit by you and hold you and tell you everything that they were doing and going to do and I also told you everything I could think of because I knew our time together was almost over. I told you, "My son I love you and I love you enough to let you die, to let you die with the peace and dignity you deserve." I know that you knew everything I would say to you just by your expression or the occasional tear that would fall down on your cheek.

As I sat with you over the weekend, I was truly amazed at how loved you were. Your friends poured in constantly. You know I would have never in my wildest dreams thought I would see some of these young men cry; they always wanted to leave that macho image, but I did see them cry. I saw them hold your hand and talk to you. I saw the true meaning of friendship. You, my son, were so blessed.

I did not leave your side all weekend except when your friends were in with you. I felt that they needed their own time with you. As Monday came around; I cried and cried and held you so close to me, telling you everything that was going to happen. My final promise to you, my son; to take you off of life support and let God take total control.

Time drew near and you can't imagine the people that were there. Melissa, the Chaplain, had all your friends come into your room, and they all held hands and prayed; then they told stories about what ya'll used to do, and she asked them if they could throw one big party what would they do? I don't know what their answer was; it wasn't for me to know.

At 8:00 p.m. I went to the nurse's desk and asked them if Hospice was on their way over; you see as soon as the life support was removed, we were going to transfer you through the underground tunnel straight to the in-house Hospice. With your sister holding your right hand and I holding your left hand, the life support was removed; you were stable enough to be moved.

Oh my son, when we came out of CCU with you in that bed, the hallways were lined with your friends and family, and everybody walked through that tunnel with us. I told Rick on the way and the nurse we had better hurry because we were losing you. If you could have seen the look on the nurse's faces when this huge crowd of people came inside, you would have been amazed. We got you to your room; just as if you were here at home my son; friends and family stayed; some left; some came back.

I sat on the bed and held your hands all through the night and talked to you, my son. I want you to know that you are the best son a mother could ever have; God gave you to me for such a short time and now it is God's turn. I prayed with you, I read to you, I talked to you, and, my son, I know you understood. Around 6:00 a.m. I began to notice some changes and went to the nurses' station and we agreed that we had better call everybody back. People began to arrive; the minutes were oh so precious to me my son; our time together was almost over. As I sat on your bed and lay my head on your chest I knew, my son, when you took your last breath, God had taken you home with Him, no more pain and suffering, no more insulin and shots, etc. "You are at peace now my son." I sat with you they say for over an hour and then I recall telling Rick to go tell the nurse to call the funeral home that I wanted to take my baby home.

My son, when we finally arrived here at the house people came from everywhere; I couldn't believe all the people. I was in a daze.

The next morning I had to go make your arrangements. My son, I let your 8 friends who were pallbearers and your sister pick everything out; I believed that your friends should be as much a part of your death as they were your life. I owed them this much.

It's so hard to believe that you are not here on earth with us anymore. God called his angel home. Today we made your funeral arrangements and I believe that you would be very pleased. I allowed your friends and your sister to take over this part and they did a beautiful job. James, I never knew how blessed you were and how many lives you have touched. Norbert called from Austin today and the house has been full of your friends and family. I went to the funeral home earlier to see you and son you looked so at peace; so tranquil. No more pain and no more suffering. You are free my son. So many of your friends have come over and shared with me some of their favorite times with you. I feel blessed to be your mother. This week is a blur for me my son; I cannot believe that you are gone. Today we lay you to rest my son; I did something out of the ordinary, I asked all of your friends to sit with the family. After all, most of these kids are family, white, black, Mexican, you saw no color in people. You were unique. As I sit here writing this trying to

remember your funeral, all I remember were the hundreds of people I saw. There was Mr. Horton from Champs; you made him so proud. James, you are going to be an uncle. I know that JoAnna told you at the hospital and I know that you heard every word she said. You will be the baby's GUARDIAN ANGEL. Life will never be the same, my son, for a part of me died with you and I carry you in my heart until I meet you at the Crossroads.

Thank you for being my son, for loving m, for trusting in me. You are the greatest son a mother could have, and now you are reunited with your Mema, Big Pa, and your daddy. What a reunion my son!

I love you James.

Your loving mother,

MOM

James Irvin "J.D." Scroggins was born on August 31, 1978 and passed away on March 26, 2002, at the age of 23 years, 6 months, and 26 days. He was a juvenile insulin dependent diabetic.

His cause of death was diabetic coma and hypoxic encephalopathy (brain swelling and damage) which was caused after they revived him twice. We had to make the decision to remove James from Life Support, a decision no parent should ever have to make. You can go to www.mem.com and type in SCROGGINS and click on James Scroggins' picture and see the memorial I am working on for him. I would have to say the symbol for James would be a leprechaun. He always said they were his good luck charm. Even though he has been gone over 2 years, it has taken me this long to put things into my thought process and start to grieve for him. As a mother, I spent the first 2 years trying to get my daughter, husband, and dad all better, forgetting that I hadn't even begun to grieve for him myself. We did receive a blessing after we lost James; our daughter gave birth to her first and only child; a son, Jamari. I say a blessing; yes, he truly is, being her 4th pregnancy and the only one she ever was able to carry full term, he is so much like his Uncle James.

The family would like for you to view their website: www.mem.com and type in Scroggins. Be sure to read the tributes, especially Rick's who was not "just a step-father."

J.D.'s symbols are a Leprechaun and a basketball.

Betsey Libby's son, Dale Belyea (7-17-84) was killed in an auto accident, 8-7-95. Her daughter, Roselee Belyea was killed in an auto accident, 4-11-04. Betsey would like to hear from other bereaved parents.

Betsey Libby
493 Cumberland Ave. #6
Portland, ME 04101

Cindy Jo Greever has made a website for Dale and Roselee. I hope you will visit the website and write Betsey, she does not have email. The website is:

www.geocities.com/cindyjos/dalerooselee.html

Garry and Connie Hale's son, Tim Mitchell (11-17-78), died in an auto accident, 4-11-04.

Connie wrote about her family:

Thank you for the card and such a nice letter. I go to church with Linda (Flory who referred Connie) and I am so blessed to have her as a friend. She came to my house the day of Tim's accident and I know that was hard for her to do. It means so much to know so many people care.

I read about your son's accident in the book (Children of the Dome). Tim was also in a car accident. He is my only biological child. I have been blessed with 3 great step-children, a son & two daughters and also with 3 special grandchildren. They are grown and have moved away. Veronica and her family live in Kansas City, MO. Venessa and Shaun live in Richmond, KY which is only 20 miles from us, so we usually see them on a weekly basis. We've not seen Veronica or the grandkids for 6 months. They moved away shortly after Tim's accident. They are planning a visit soon, so that gives me something to look forward to.

My husband, Garry, and Tim were really close. Tim was still living at home and that even makes it harder, I think. I look for him all the time and check his room even though I know he's not there, but somehow I sense his presence. I would really like the grief packet and more information about the conference. Anything helps.

My son was an organ donor and I intend to make a memory quilt patch to add to a quilt which will be at a recognition ceremony in Frankfort, KY. This will be sometime in November. It would be nice to attend since this is Tim's birth month.

We chose the willow tree for Tim's sign because we long and weep to see him again. Your website was helpful.

Tim's symbol is a willow tree.

Clifford and Donna Scheck have lost 3 children. Clifford, IV (8-17-88), and Savanna (8-17-90) were hit by a drunk driver, 7-11-99. Cansus (12-10-86) was killed in an auto accident, 2-15-03.

Donna shares their tragedies:

I have been a fellow traveler since 1999.

On July 11, 1999, my two youngest children:

Clifford Christian Scheck IV and Savanna Leeann Scheck were killed while visiting their grandmother in Pennsylvania. They, along with their 10-year-old cousin, were at a cabin owned by my sister with her family and my parents when the children asked to cross the little country road to go buy candy from the candy store with the money Savanna had received from the tooth fairy the night before. They had bought their candy and had come back across the road and were about 10 feet up the private drive when a drunk driver lost control of his car, came down off the embankment and killed my two children instantly. My nephew was not physically hurt, but will have to live with what he witnessed. My daughter Savanna was 10 years old and my son Clifford was 8 years old. The drunk driver was 29 years old, driving on a revoked license from a conviction on 6/23/99 and had another charge pending at the time of this crash. He was sentenced on two counts of murder 3 and was sentenced to 32 1/2 years & 90 days to 62 1/2 years & 90 days.

Savanna Leeann Scheck - 8/17/88 - 7/11/99

Clifford Christian Scheck IV - 8/17/90 - 7/11/99

My husband, my two oldest children (Joseph - age 15 at the time) and (Cansus - age 12 at the time) and myself survived the loss of Savanna and Clifford. Years of counseling and a near loss of my husband and my marriage, but we managed to get through it and remain a family. Then on February 15, 2003, the unthinkable happened. Our daughter Cansus - age 16 was in Florida visiting my husbands parents when she, along with our 17 year old niece and three of their friends were killed. They were hit from behind and pushed through a traffic light, where they came in contact with a second car that was making an illegal turn and the second impact caused them to hit a Cable TV box which, upon impact with this, the car burst into flames because the gas line had been cut by the car that hit them from behind and all five children were burned beyond recognition. Again, the results of not one drunk driver but two - These drivers remain in the Polk County Jail in Florida waiting for their day in court. It's been 1 1/2 years and they still have not gone before a jury of their peers to find out what their fate will be.

Cansus Elaine Scheck - 12/10/86 - 2/15/03

We now have 1 out of 4 children left. Our only remaining child is now 20 years old and has given us our first grandchild. After all the heartache and pain I survive because God is good and continues to bless me daily. Children are a true blessing and I am so grateful for the time I had with my children. I miss them terribly and wonder why all this has happened, but I also thank God for everything He has given me and continues to give me.

Special things we do for the children:

On their birthdays we release balloons with cards attached. (The card they sent this year had the children's pictures, names, birth and death dates, and asked that they be

contacted if balloon was found.) *We release a balloon for each year of life they should have been celebrating.*

We also go to the cemetery every night and light a candle for each of them. We have been doing this since 7/99 and will continue to do it as long as we are able. When we are out of town, friends light them for us. We have also put solar lights there. We were the first, now the cemetery is full of solar lights – little lights about the stones – it's a wonderful way to keep their lights shining.

They have the following symbols on the children's gravestones.

Cliffy's symbol is a NASCAR racecar, Savanna's symbols are butterflies & teddy bears, and Cansus' symbol is Stitch (from the movie, Lilo and Stitch).

Donna (1-14-65), daughter of Anita Van Peer, died from a motorbike accident with a drunk driver, 9-21-83.

Anita wrote about Donna and her continuing grief that we all experience:

Donna Van Peer was the eldest daughter of Chris and Anita Van Peer. Donna blessed the lives of her two sister's Jackie and Michele and one brother David. Donna was taken from us at the young age of 18, September 21, 1983.

People think that as the years go by the easier the feeling of loss is. However, it is the years that go by and you feel the loss more. The loss of a daughter graduating from the college she loved in Hawaii. The daughter marrying the man she loved, the daughter having children to share.

Each year is just another reminder of the things she did not get to do.

If Donna had lived the life on this earth she deserved, she would most definitely have been involved in youth sports. Softball and Basketball fit her six-foot frame perfectly. She loved the team unity and spending time perfecting her skills on the court.

Donna would have been a doting and loving aunt to her three nieces, and six nephews. She loved kids and I think her warm smile is what always brought children to her.

Although active, she loved her alone time. Reading was a great escape for Donna. Being the oldest in a house with four kids, she definitely loved her alone time.

*Donna would have been so excited to see the new **Star Wars** movies that have come out in the last three years. She was an avid fan of George Lucas films.*

I will send a picture of Donna as soon as I can, so that all can see her bright smile, and a reminder of the tragic loss that can occur when one chooses to drive or ride with someone who is drunk.

It is truly a loss that never goes away. Always, Anita Van Peer

Donna's symbols are roses.

Rodney and Susie Chrisman's son, Jarrod (9-14-79), was murdered, 5-6-03.

Susie shares her great news:

I have some good news. Sept. 29, we got an email, from Jarrod's ex-girlfriend, his daughter's mom. Since Sept. 29, we have got to see Madison, (Jarrod's daughter) 6 times. She is 3 years old, and this was the first we got to see her. Jarrod got to see her 8-10 times. I remember his words the first time he seen her. "Mom, she is a beautiful little girl, and I love her!" Her mom had put "father unknown" on birth certificate. So Jarrod had to get that all changed. Let me tell you a story about the day we got to meet Madison. First you, remember it was Jarrod's balloon found in VA. Every since Jarrod was murdered, we have let off lots and lots of balloons with Jarrod's name and web address. The day we met Madison, a few hours before. As I walked pass a window, there on the ground, was a red balloon and a yellow ribbon, no name attached. We live way out in the country, in our back yard, there is not much opening for a balloon to land. To us that was a sign. That Jarrod knew we were going to get to meet him daughter. That he was sending his love. I took a photo of it. We will never get rid of that balloon. :-)

When we met Madison, she took right to us. She never once ran to her mom. She stayed right there with us. When we got ready to leave, I asked her for a high five. Her mom asked her if she wanted to give us a hug. So we got a hug. Second time we seen her, I asked her if she remembered our names. Which she didn't, so I suggested she call us, Grandpa and Grandma. :-) :-) :-) Third time, we saw her, as we were getting ready to leave, she yells out to me, "Grandma I love you." :-) :-) :-) She had already told Grandpa, she loved him as they were playing in the sand box.

There is so much she does, that is Jarrod. She likes orange, which was Jarrod's favorite color at that age. She has a loud laugh, curly hair, which her Dad had. Her's is a different color than her Dad's. There is so much we are still finding out. We are enjoying being with her. A part of Jarrod is still with us. Our hole in our heart is still there, and will always be there. Now though, it is covered with a bandage.

Also you can count on us next year. It was so very, very helpful to all of us.

The family would like for you to view Jarrod's website:

www.jarodchrisman.com

Jarrod's symbol is an orange balloon.

Janice Goodman's daughter, Krissy (11-1-82), died in a boating accident, 6-20-04.

Janice remembers those of our children who have eagles as symbols:

I received this poem through a Grieving Parents' web ring. I remembered that a lot of the parents here have an Eagle as their Symbol. I thought they would like to read it:

AN EAGLE CAME TO ME

*One morning,
An eagle came to me.
After circling my yard,
He landed on a rock
In the river.
"I have a message for you,"
He said in a voice
That rose above the current
And filled me with attentiveness.
"It is time for you to rise
Above the pain and sorrow
That has darkened your days
And made your nights intolerable.
Just as my wings allow me to soar
Above the rain clouds to the sunlit sky,
Your strength, wisdom, and compassion
Will lift you."
"How do you know it is time for me to rise?"
I asked respectfully.
"Your wings are complete," he answered.
"Just as each feather in my wings
Strengthens my flight,
Each step you have taken in your healing
Has prepared you for this moment."*

Patty Joyce

Krissy's symbol is a peacock.

Gary and Barbara Christian's son, Scott (1-11-77), died from a soccer injury, 10-4-92.

The Christians have established a soccer tournament in memory of Scott to raise money for scholarships in Scott's memory. Barbara shared:

We are co-leaders for the East Chapter of The Compassionate Friends which is a support group for parents/grandparents who have had children die. We have been involved with TCF for almost 12 years. We feel if we can help one family get through this time and begin the rough road they will have to walk in the coming months, then we are honoring Scott's memory and he is pleased with what we are doing. He knows we miss him very much every day and he sends us signs to let us know he is okay. Each day we live is one day closer to when we will see him. Oh what a day that will be. God bless you and your efforts. A couple of months ago a friend of ours sent us an email regarding what we are and have done in our son Scott's memory. Scott was a 15-yr-old soccer player who was injured in a match and misdiagnosed at the hospital emergency room and 36 hours later he was gone. This happened Oct 4, 1992. In early 1993 we founded the Scott Christian Memorial Soccer Foundation, Inc. which is a non-profit organization. We give educational one-time scholarships to senior girl/boy soccer players who have the intent to play on the collegiate level. We also host a soccer tournament in his memory in the fall. This year marks our 10th tournament. One of our scholarship recipients will be attending Cumberland College this fall and is on the college website and team photo. Her name is Kelly Mason from Boone County High School in Florence, KY. We have a website which we would like for you to look at and see some of the things we are doing. www.scottchristiansoccer.net. If you would like further info please let us know through the website or at soccer17@fuse.net. What you are doing is a good thing.

Scott's symbol is #17.

Wanda Wehunt's son, Todd (8-23-73), died in an auto accident, 8-31-00.

Wanda would like for you to visit Todd's website:

<http://www.jessicalyn2000.homestead.com/MyTodd.html>

Todd's symbol is a skateboarder with wings on the skateboard.

Bonnie McClelland's son, Timothy (7-9-84), completed suicide, 1-21-02.

I encourage you to read the article about Bonnie's involvement in suicide prevention.
http://www.tbnweekly.com/pubs/seminole_beacon/view_092804_smb-04.php

Tim's symbol is a "Z."

Chad (4-8-80), son of Paul and Debbie Jussel, was killed in an auto accident, 6-12-99.

Debbie explains how they chose Chad's symbol:

We now live in Carlisle, PA. I had never before had a hawk land in my yard. In the last few years we have had them perch on front porch railings, land in trees and look into our windows, and appear repeatedly in our yard regardless of the state we were in. I have moved three times since losing Chad and my last two homes are in very residential areas.

Chad's symbol is a hawk.

Marge Semons' son, Robert III, (2-9-67), was murdered 7-29-00.

How can I ever thank you--when Robert died you were truly a miracle--God sending His love to me--you have never forgotten an angel date--it so nice that someone cares—it is so important to me. This article- Inspired by an Eskimo Legend you sent to me with the cross and angels--in your letter thank you--you are so kind--only another parent could realize how terrible the pain can be--I thought I was ok this year until this Tuesday it hit me and I couldn't get out of bed--after awhile I did get up and go into the office and started working but then in the afternoon I had to drive to the old cemetery in my town and go to the back and scream and cry--(Robert is buried in Ohio--not in Texas)--but going there seems to help so much--the first year I went everyday on my lunch hour and just cried and screamed--the second year I knew he wasn't coming home, so I planted 350-400 vines and bushes and the digging helped me heal--the end of the third year I didn't have to plant so many things and I didn't have to go and scream--but like Tuesday I have my days--I have a boss who has lost a his son at age 18--and it is no mistake I am working for this great man--and I have a dear wonderful friend online that has lost a son--so God sends me who I need to help---and my best friend in November lost her youngest son--so I am able (I hope) to help someone else like you have me--thank you, thank you for writing to me each year on Robert's Angel date--I love the Eskimo Legend. (Thank you---thank you) "Is it possible that between the stars, there are openings in Heaven where the love of our children pours through and shines down on us to let us know they are happy?"

My vines are so beautiful on my chain fence this year--I sit under my maple tree and look over there and I believe this is a little piece of heaven God has made for me out of this terrible pain--and his brother Jeff and I planted 6 apple trees in that area--we had locusts this year so three of them died, but the other three are beautiful--so again God is good--I call them my screaming vines--I planted so many--trumpet vines--honeysuckles--and they have climbed to the heavens so I know it must only be a gift from Robert to me from God and in the front yard--I found at the nursery Barbara Bush roses (pink) and I planted them close my patio- in my back yard--never in my lifetime have I smelled anything so wonderful as those roses--and later I found out Barbara Bush had lost a child --so God is in charge of our pain and he brings me peace in so many things that are connected to Roberts death. Oh Dinah--thank you so much for the wonderful book--Children of the Dome--I give it to every friend or anyone I know that has lost a child to help them--it has helped me so much in just knowing you and sharing all my pain and joy with you. God Bless you.

Robert's symbol is a butterfly.

Larry and Janet Brashear's daughter, Denise Sweet (9-22-73), died in an auto accident, 8-23-91.

They tell of the hurricanes that have hit their area:

Thank you so much for your prayers! We know God is listening.

Our home was spared once again with leaking and a lot of little damages, but nothing major like a roof being blown off as other neighbors experienced. I truly believe God must have sent angels to protect this home. You see, this home was a true gift from God in the first place and we dedicated it back to him when it was completed. He has used it as a resting place for many people, so we hope to repair it soon so it will once again be available and suitable for those needing shelter.

The certain miracle is that our home and many, many others are still standing after winds of 120 mph and tornados in the area.

God is certainly faithful to us!

May He continue to bless you and your ministry to grieving families.

In His Love,

Janet

Denise's symbols are masks and teddy bears.

Leslie Franco's daughter, Heather, (11-2-86), died from acute Pancreatitis, 12-29-00.

Leslie would like for you to view Heather's website:

<http://www.freewebs.com/dooles>

Heather's symbols are darker colored butterflies (blues, blacks, purples) and an angel frog.

Paul and Nancy Hudak's daughter, Mary Beth Connor (4-10-58) died from Melanoma, 9-24-01.

Nancy shared:

Mary Beth died of melanoma. She had spent two weeks here on the island with her family and began having excruciating headaches. When she returned to her home in

Kansas City, a cat scan revealed metastasized melanoma with lesions in her lungs and on her brain. We flew immediately to KC and began a search for a place where a miracle might happen. We sent MRI's to Duke, Johns Hopkins, Anderson, and were finally told that her best hope was the Pittsburgh Melanoma Center under the direction of Dr. John Kirkwood. Dr. Kirkwood agreed to try and we flew with her to Pittsburgh where intensive treatment began immediately.

After three weeks things were looking a little hopeful and her husband, Keith, drove with their five children from Kansas City to spend the weekend celebrating the completion of one round of treatment. The night of their arrival she suffered a massive seizure and died the next day. It has been a great grief for her nine siblings and of course, for her young children and her husband.

To honor her wonderful life, a scholarship has been established at St. Luke's Hospital for nurses aspiring to improve their skills and a children's waiting room was dedicated to her in the Hillman Cancer Center in Pittsburgh as well as an amphitheater at Visitation School where her children go to school. We are presently trying to establish a consciousness-raising advocacy group relative to melanoma nationally.

Her children spend a month with us in the summer and we try to help Keith in whatever way we can. We all miss her as much as ever. She was a very special young woman.

Paul and Nancy observed Mary Beth's angel date in this manner:

Many of our family came to be together and we sunned on her beloved beach and shared memories we so love. Then Paul and I "unveiled" a portrait we had painted and it was another step forward in our life without her—still not easy.

Mary Beth's family says that Mary Beth is "our star."

Yvette Norton's daughter, Courtney (5-20-95), was killed in an auto accident, 9-16-01.

Yvette put this poem in the paper on Courtney's angel date:

I Will Forever Love My Little Angel

*When God calls little children to dwell with Him above
We mortals sometimes question the wisdom of His love.
For no heartache compares with the death of one small child
Who does so much to make our world seem wonderful and mild.
Perhaps God tires of calling the aged to His fold.
So He picks a rosebud before it can grow old.
God knows how much we need them and so He takes but few*

*To make the land of Heaven more beautiful to view.
Believing this is difficult still somehow we must try,
The saddest word mankind knows will always be “good-bye.”
So when a child departs, we who are left behind
Must realize God loves children.
Angels are hard to find.*

There is not a day goes by that we don't think of you.

Turtles are Courtney's symbol.

Ken and Karin Arno's son, Chris (9-6-82), after a five year battled, died from Ewings Sarcoma, 6-9-02.

Here are a few of the things that people have been written about Chris:

*There is a new star in heaven tonight
Chris was brought to share his light.
He looks down on us at night.
With a light so bright, we'll have to look away.
For he will see us as we shed a tear
we remember him, a friend so dear.*

*He sparkles down on us to share
his thoughts on how he feels today.
LOVED from birth to eternity
HAPPINESS now that he has left pain to go to perfect peace*

*So one night, real soon,
Look up at the stars so bright
Find the one that shines from Chris's light
Give him a big bright smile and say
Hey Chris, we miss you today.*

A Wing and a Prayer

God has a new angel. His name is Chris Arno.

The prayers we prayed were mostly selfish. We prayed that this young man might be miraculously healed. We prayed that the cancer would leave his body and he would grow strong and healthy. That he would marry, have children, and live long enough to play with his grandchildren. We prayed that the pain and suffering that God's newest angel had to endure would no longer bother him. And that's the prayer that God chose to answer.

For his family and friends, even those of us who didn't know him too well, we wish it had been different. It's hard to face the fact that Chris is gone. It's hard to accept that he never really had a chance to live. And it's hard to accept that so much of his young life was filled with pain and suffering and imminent death. And it's hard to accept that God chose the 'wrong' prayer to answer.

But God did what He felt was best. God looked at Chris, looked at his pain, and gave him wings to rise above it. God touched him and made him whole and well again. But that touch took him to a different place. Physically away from his family and friends. But NEVER, EVER away from our hearts.

We miss Chris. And we cry because he was too young to die. You aren't supposed to die when you are 19. We cry because we wanted to have him in our lives for a long, long time. But we also rejoice that he is without pain now. For the first time in so long. We rejoice that he is with God.

Chris was my nephew's friend. And, since he lived up near my nephew, I didn't know him very well. But long ago, when his health problems began, he became my concern too. I always asked my sister how he was doing. She always kept me updated. When Chris got good news, we smiled and hoped and prayed for more good news. When he got bad news, we cried and ached and prayed for the news to get better. I loved Chris, even though I didn't know him that well.

Chris was a normal kid in many respects. He liked to play video and computer games. He liked being with his friends. Yes, a very normal kid. But, unlike most kids his age, he had some heavy things to think about. His peers were thinking about dates, futures, colleges. Chris thought of those things and also had to think about his medical treatment. Where his next breath was coming from and if it would be his last.

Let me tell you something about Chris. That young man was a fighter! How many people would have given up when faced with problems like his? A lot. Not Chris, though. He fought and fought. Until the very last breath he drew, he fought to stay alive. Chris was the Timex watch of young men. He took a licking, but he just kept on ticking.

That's what I think of when I think of Chris. I think of a young man - faced with more than someone should ever have to face at ANY age keeping his spirits up, keeping the spirits of his friends and family up, a young man who wanted just what any other young man wanted. And he was willing to fight for it, to struggle and try.

I admire Chris. And although we may have prayed for a miracle, I'm glad, at least, that God answered one prayer, and gave him wings to rise above the pain.

Yes, there is a new angel in Heaven. His name is Chris. And he is now a blessing to Heaven as he once was, and always will be, a blessing to those of us here on Earth.

Sleep sweet, Chris.

Love,

Leslie

Occasionally, we are graced with the presence of an earth-bound angel. They are unable to stay with us for long, but while they do, they bring unprecedented joy and happiness to all they touch. While they are here, we bask in their goodness and marvel at their contribution to the world. When they leave, we are left with the devastation that

comes with losing such a wonderful being...but we must remember...the earth-bound angels are not ours to keep. They are ours to enjoy, learn from, and behold until they return home.

Chris' symbol is a Blue Jay.

Kenny John Lutz (2-1-80), son of Marge Nunn, completed suicide, 8-19-04.

Marge wrote this letter to Rosemary Smith:

I lost my son Kenneth John Lutz on August 19, 2004 by suicide. We always call him Kenny or Ken. Kenny turned 24 on February 1, 2004 so he was 24 years, 6 months and 18 days old when he passed. He was my second of three sons...no girls. His older brother Mark and Kenny were from my first marriage. Mark Colin Lutz was 27 on September 13. Like your son Jeremiah he was born in 1977. My youngest son is 8 now and his name is Drew (Andrew Brooks Nunn) like your oldest son. When I picked up your book 'Children of the Dome' the similarities of course struck me immediately and I felt an immediate closeness. Kenny as you pointed out, about the same age as your Jordan, Drew the same age as Mark and my Drew with the same name as your oldest.

Kenny was a very loving child from the very beginning. He could never get close enough to hug and snuggle. He was a great son, fun and a joy to be around. He followed his father around all the time helping him work around the house, going fishing and just enjoying everything his father did. When his father and I split up he missed him tremendously as his Dad called or saw the boys very infrequently. When my new husband, Drew and I moved to Kentucky, Kenny had a great job working with his uncle and was able to buy a car and his own house. He also was able to spend lots of time with his Dad whose health was failing rapidly due to excessive drinking and great lack of personal care. After Ken's father passed five years ago, Kenny slowly went into a depression. Slowly he stopped visiting here, slowly he stopped visiting family back home in Chicago and his phone calls were more infrequent. He let his house go and moved from place to place and at times I had a hard time finding him. He would say he was all right, that his father's death did not affect him; that his father deserved his fate for the things he did to his family and to himself. Last February he was recklessly driving a friend's vehicle and hit a tree at a high speed. He had broken his femur bone, the bone piercing through his skin out of the side of his thigh. I spent several days up north with him and he stayed with his favorite cousin during his recovery. He was very happy and doing well. He was determined and recovered a month ahead of what the doctors had told him it would be and went back to work in early June. Within days though he just went into a manic state. He decided to go back to work with his uncle (his Dad's brother) and just was uncontrollable. He had the racing thoughts, constant chatter; saw visions of his father, and outrageous ideas, etc. His Aunt got him into an emergency room and was diagnosed as bipolar. He went on medication, which seemed to help a little and kept constant contact with me. He would not go into a hospital. Still

unable to control the streaming thoughts in his head though he finally checked himself in and went into Ingalls Hospital. His medication was regulated, he took classes to understand his illness (how to cope and take care of himself and took anger management classes too. In July Drew and I went up North and I immediately went to see Ken there. He looked great. The best I had seen him for a long time. We talked for hours and that's when he finally told me that he had been driving the vehicle when he got into the accident. He did not want to keep it from me any longer. He realized God have given him another chance and he wanted to make the most of that. He seemed to have a clear mind, a plan and a renewed enthusiasm for getting his life back on track. He was ready to get back out into the world. We met with his counselors whom I already had constant contact with, and they said he was ready to get out. We went over the steps he would have to follow to live life as bipolar and he understood his regime he would have to follow. He got out of the hospital the next day. I picked him up and Ken, Drew and I spent the next week together. Ken loves Drew immensely and just enjoyed being with him, feelings that were mutual. We talked for hours and his plan to go to Florida to work with a friend the next month was progressing. We had such a wonderful time swimming, playing ball, miniature golfing, sharing meals, taking long walks and just enjoying our time before we had to part ways. But only after a few days after I got back home Kenny called his brother Mark out in Arizona and wanted to come out there and he did not want me to know. Mark of course told me unbeknownst to Ken. Ken had told him that the plan to go to Florida had fallen through and he wanted to get a job out in Arizona. Mark told him to come and he could stay with him and his girlfriend but he has to get a job and help them around the house and with expenses. Ken looked for a job when he got up his ambition but never really gave a big effort. Mark tried to push him and finally asked me to call Kenny to talk to him. At first Kenny would not even talk to me. Then he slowly came around. He said he was not taking his medication and we talked of the importance of taking the meds, keeping a journal, seeing a doctor, etc. He had one job in line where they were just waiting on the results of a criminal check and after that came in Kenny could start and I think he was hanging his hat on just that. I tried my best to encourage him. We don't know for sure if Ken ever did get the results of the criminal check. He told Mark he did the day after I talked to Ken and Ken told him there was a drug possession charge on the report from 6 years ago and he did not get the job then. That was something I never knew about. The next day, Thursday, August 19, as Mark left for work he told Kenny he would be an hour or so late and Michelle, Mark's girlfriend was getting off late. When Mark got home about 8:30 he called for Kenny but got no answer. Mark cleaned up some things in the kitchen and went out to the garage to throw out the trash. When he entered the garage he saw Kenny in the corner and thought he was either going to the bathroom or praying and he yelled his name. He went up to him and shook him with no response. As he called 911 he looked up and noticed the rope tied around Kenny's neck, an to get a knife and cut him down. As Ken's lifeless body fell upon him, Mark dropped the phone as he was talking to the 911 dispatcher. The ambulance was there in no time and would not let Mark call me. They told him they would handle getting the sad news to me. I woke up at 11:30 that night, falling asleep on the couch while watching TV. I woke thinking about what a loving child Kenny was, I remember. I went straight to bed and just as I was about to fall asleep the front door bell rang. It was a state

policeman from Columbia Kentucky calling to give us the sorrowful news. At first I was in disbelief, then totally numb. I knew I had to talk and to get a hold of Mark, my Mom and my sister. The next day I flew out to Mark. His uncle had made it out too and we all stayed at Mark and Michelle's. We all talked for hours. I had to go into the garage and see where I had lost my son and even though I did not want Mark to relive it again I needed to know from him how he did it. The next day we had a Memorial service for Ken and Mark and Michelle's friends, bosses and co-workers came. The few days after that we made arrangements for Kenny to be cremated, per his wish. His Dad was cremated and spread over the river they fished together in Wisconsin and the rest of the ashes buried there where Kenny's aunt/godmother lives. He wanted the same thing. And per his wishes we had a memorial service in Chicago with ALL his friends there. We had it the next weekend and it turned out very nice. His friends and cousins participated by eulogies and helium filled balloons with notes sent up to Ken. It was very touching and I was still most numb from the loss, emotions, travel and the pain I knew my surviving sons, family and friends were going through too.

It's been two months now since Ken's death and I miss dearly. Sometimes I still think it was all a bad dream. I get better every day though. I talk about him and read. I've gone through his personal belongings, redone his album with pictures, cards I saved and mementos from the day he was born until the day I lost him. After I sorted out my thoughts and feelings I wrote a poem to him that I have enclosed. I never wrote a poem before, but it reflects just how I feel and think of him. That poem is a part of his album too. It's just a part of his life as it is mine.

I know I have to and want to go on. I always considered myself a good person and now I have found myself being more compassionate and aware. I know I will grow more with that as time goes on. I still have work to do here and people that need me and I need them too. Mark is doing well. He's working two jobs now while the house that he and Michele are having built is progressing. I have sent him the poem and literature on the loss of a sibling. We keep very much in touch with each other. Michele is very good for him and they are very much in love. She lost her mother in an auto accident 5 years ago and they support each other very well. He's a great son with a contagious smile and a wonderful personality. I keep in touch with him quite often by phone and email.

Drew sadly misses his big brother and we talk about Kenny often. He has his mementos of Ken and always looked up to him. They got along great. We keep him busy with of course school, sports and church functions. He adds Kenny to the prayer list in Sunday school for the service.

Family, friends and friends from church have been very supportive. They help keep me going and show their compassion when they see I need it.

I'm glad that I found you and Dinah too. Dinah as you may remember sent you my name and some background on Kenny and that's how you came to send me your package. The things you have sent and the support have really helped, more than I could have ever imagined a few short weeks ago. One day too I would like to visit the Cumberland Inn in Williamsburg and see the dome. I will make those plans soon too.

I have attached the poem to Ken and the last pictures of Ken that were taken in July when Drew and I were up there. As you will see there are two pictures of Ken and Drew and one of Ken and me.

I thank you and Dinah again for 'being' there when I really needed you both. Even though we never met I feel I know you both well. The wonderful things you both have done in memory of your sons I know have left a lasting impression on many people. I know it has with me.

Marge Nunn

P. S. I had typed most of this letter on the date shown above, and as I was proof reading it my computer locked up. I had to turn off the computer and thought I had lost the letter completely. I thought Ken may not want me to send it, but I hand wrote it again and was going to re-type it this week, saving as I went along. This morning, October 25, I went in to print Kenny's poem for my Mom and some other people and the letter was retrieved when I pulled up the poem. I was so happy. Maybe Ken had second thoughts! I saved it immediately!

I have written a poem for Ken that covers a lot of the feelings that I have been experiencing since I lost him. I never wrote a poem before, but I really wanted to write one to and for him:

***To My Son
Kenneth John Lutz
February 1, 1980 – August 19, 2004***

*Ken, when I saw you last I wish I had known
The pain, the suffering, and how you felt so all alone.
You let me have faith in you and assured me you were all right
Sadly a month later you took your own life early that August night.*

*I know in my heart you tried and did the best you could for yourself,
I only wish you could have conveyed to me more and let me
Know the pain that you felt.*

*I understand now you couldn't tell me, you didn't know why or how.
A mother wants to help her son, but I couldn't, I know that now.*

*I'll forever miss your phone calls and your special "Hi's!"
I'll forever miss your special hugs, your beautiful face,
Your smile, your eyes.*

*I do know you're in a better place now; the confusion is gone in your head.
I know you look down on your brothers and me and
You love us just as much as you said.*

*I feel you always, deep inside of me all the time.
Rarely a moment goes by that you are not in my thoughts and on my mind.
Since before you were born I loved you so
I still have wonderful memories of you, memories I'll never let go.*

*The rainbows you send when I'm feeling so low
Like ones we shared together when you were with me here below.
And those butterflies you have drop by, so peaceful and just for me
I know you are saying "Mom please know that now I have been set free."*

*Any comfort I may have found, two nights before your death
Our last words we talked on the phone were, as always "I love you too"
As we both took a collective breath.
That conversation is one I'll never forget
Those last words I'll never regret.*

*I lost a piece of my heart that night Ken, that piece was always yours though
Still forever with me son, I know you and I never really let go.*

*Until we are together again,
Love always,
Mom*

He had a great passion for fishing and any spare moment he had he'd be off with his fishing pole. He was very good at it and like a good sportsman, always through his catch. He just loved the challenge of catching them. Another sport he took up later was golfing. He could hit a golf ball straight and long and really loved the game too. He did very well golfing even though he did not show a real interest in it until the last 5 or 6 years.

Kenny's symbols are a rainbow, baseball glove, fishing pole and golf club.

Coni Mott's son, Stephen (1-12-57), was killed in an auto accident, 10-3-99.

Coni shared how she spent Stephen's angel date:

This year was particularly rough because it was not only his fifth anniversary that he went to the Lord – but it was also a sunny October Sunday, the same kind of day we

lost our Stephen. Thankfully, I always spend that day with his wife and two children, who are 5 and 6 years old now. Jake is 5 and Garrison is 6. Jake was the baby I put in the bassinette and smelled that overpowering aroma of roses. And that was the overpowering scent in the room when my mother passed. So your little roses in the card were a beautiful sign for me.

Thank you again for remembering my son, Stephen on his anniversary day and his January 12th birthday. I know your prayers are with us and I want you to know that my prayers are with you.

Stephen's symbol is a rose.

In the summer of 2002 a few of ladies went to TCF meeting in Kettering Ohio. After the meeting they seemed to have so much to talk about that it was after midnight when they parted but not before someone mentioned they should have a "sleepover" or a "Retreat." And that is what they did. This is not a TCF function, although most everyone is a bereaved parent or sibling, a couple grandparents too. If you would like more information about the Circle of Weavers, their website is:

<http://buttaflyjackie.tripod.com/2004circleofweaversretreat/>

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

For the last five years the University of Memphis has had a special tribute to Tommy Smith, son of Pat and Linda Smith. The family would like to share Tommy with you. If you go to the website www.gotigersgo.com and pull up Men's Soccer, you will find a couple of articles and pictures of the Alumni Weekend and the Tommy Smith Banquet.

<http://gotigersgo.collegesports.com/sports/m-soccer/spec-rel/101504aaa.html>

Tommy's symbols are a soccer ball and smile.

Edith Epperson's son, Richie (11-10-87), was killed in an auto accident, 6-8-04.

Edith would like for you to read the website signed by some of Richie's friends:

www.richieeperson.com

Richie's symbols are two baseball bats crossing each other with a baseball under them with the #23 which was his number when he played baseball.

Jeff (11-6-79) is the son of Dave & Kathi Herzog. Jeff was killed in an auto accident 11-23-01.

Dave and Kathi are remembering Jeff in a very special way this Christmas. They are having their 2nd "Jeff's Legacy of Love" open house asking everyone to: *Please join us in celebration of our son's life and to continue his legacy of love for children. We ask that you bring a new unwrapped child's toy or sweater to be donated in Jeff's memory. With your help, our wish is to share the love of Jesus and bring the magic of Christmas into the lives of underprivileged children.*

If you would like information, their email address is oksigntome@aol.com

Jeff's symbol is God.

*When a child loses a parent, they are called an orphan.
When a husband or wife loses a spouse they are called a widow or widower.
But there is no word for a parent that loses a child for there are no words to describe the pain, grief and agony that they feel for the rest of their lives.*

Now it is time for a test and what better test than with chocolate math?

YOUR AGE BY CHOCOLATE MATH

This is pretty neat.

DO NOT CHEAT BY SCROLLING DOWN FIRST!

It takes less than a minute..... Work this out as you read..

Be sure you don't read the bottom until you've worked it out! This is not one of those waste of time things, it's fun.

1. First of all, pick the number of times a week that you would like to have chocolate.
(more than once but less than 10)

2. Multiply this number by 2 (Just to be bold)

3. Add 5. (for Sunday)

4.. Multiply it by 50 I'll wait while you get the calculator.....

5. If you have already had your birthday this year add 1754....

If you haven't, add 1753

6. Now subtract the four-digit year that you were born.

You should have a three digit number ..

The first digit of this was your original number (i.e., how many times you want to have chocolate each week).

The next two numbers are

YOUR AGE! (Oh YES, it is!!!!)

THIS IS THE ONLY YEAR (2004) IT WILL EVER WORK, SO SPREAD IT AROUND WHILE IT LASTS. (Be sure to eat a piece and think about Young Jim and me, after all, I'll be eating a piece and thinking of you and yours)

If you are a bereaved parent and/or would like more information about Lamentations, or would like to share your thoughts or original poetry, please e-mail:

dinah@cumberlandcollege.edu

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

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