
LAMENTATIONS

Issue 89

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

March, 2005

Dear Fellow Travelers,

We are in the early stages of planning the last **J.I.M.'s Conference** and we hope you are planning to come. There are so many of you that I haven't yet met and I hope you will consider taking the time to come to the conference so we will be able to meet each other and give each other hugs and continued support. I feel that I know so many of your children and I want to meet the parents of these incredible children we have lost to death.

If you haven't made your motel reservations, I hope you will do so soon. If you made reservations last year for a room at the Cumberland Inn for this year, you need to confirm your reservations as soon as possible. The number is 1-800-315-0286. You can find a list of other motels in the area on the website.

Because this is the last conference, we will be making some changes in the schedule of events. On Saturday, June 4, we will dedicate Bill and Brenda Roger's **Window of Hope** that is absolutely breathtaking!! The window is 5 feet by 8 1/3 ft. and is the center window at the Grace Crum Rollins Fine Arts Center, which also houses the 2nd dome given by Luther and Rosemary Smith and is dedicated to our children. You can read more about the window on the website under "Window of Hope." You can also view the panel in memory of Young Jim and the gorgeous angel that is in the center of the window. That part of the window is 3 X 5 feet.

We will also be dedicating the **Tree of Life**. The leaves will have our children's names, birth and death dates and symbols if that is what you choose to place on the leaf or leaves you order. I hope we will be able to fill this tree with our children that will remind all who see it that our children continue to live in our hearts and they continue to be part of our individual family tree as well as our Fellow Traveler's family. You can see a picture of the tree on the website. You cannot order the leaf or leaves online, but there is an order blank on the website that you can print and then mail to:

Dinah Taylor
804 Main St.
Williamsburg, KY 40769

If you are interested in your child(ren)'s name(s) being included in our **Joining In Memory Commons** (picture of the Commons is on the website under **Dedications In Memory of our Children**), there are some bricks left and I hope we will be able to completely fill the Commons at this last conference. There is an order blank on the website. Remember to make all checks payable to: **Cumberland College**.

And, if this isn't enough to celebrate our children and being together, Beverly Donan sends the following request. This information is also on the main page of the website:

Dear Fellow Travelers:

I need your help. I need your Heart's Notes.

I would like to compile a book for bereaved parents to be used during those first few years, when we are looking for something to give us some hope that we are going to make it through life without our child or children.

I got the idea of "Joining Our Heart Notes" from a saying that was sent to me by a mother who had lost her son a few years before I lost John. On the days that the pain was so great I sometimes only seemed to have energy enough to refer to the short saying she had sent me and it seemed to get me through the day. I thought it would be good to have a whole year's worth of thoughts from other parents that share my loss (one for each day). So I came up with "Join Our Heart Notes" from the letters of my son's name.

The Heart Note can be something you have written, something someone sent you, something someone said to you, something you heard, a dream, something your child said to you, a prayer you repeated, whatever you feel like sharing that helped you get through the day.

Please send your child's name, birthday, and anniversary date. This will be a way to remember our children with our Heart Note.

I only ask that your Heart Note be brief since the spiral flip book will only be approximately 5" x 6."

Please share this letter with other Fellow Travelers so I can have enough for a full year.

*Send your Heart Note to: Beverly Donan bbdonan@spis.net
Mother of John David Donan
12-14-77 10-2-93
Symbol Hawk*

I welcome any suggestions or direction in compiling this book. I just have really felt a need for something like this for bereaved parents. So I will look forward to you sharing your Heart Notes. Please fathers, send yours too.

Beverly will have this compiled for you to receive at the conference. Please send her your Heart Notes as quickly as possible because this is a great undertaking for Beverly to do and have finished and in booklet form by June 3rd.

Grief Grafts

Paul and Mary Miller's son, Ethan Paul (4/15/04 - 5/27/04) has a beautiful website:

Ethan's family would like for you to visit Ethan's website and get to know this precious little child. Paul and Mary have moved to another state, but they took earth from Ethan's gravesite and this spring they plan to make a memory garden for Ethan at their new home. <http://ethanmillersheavenlyplayground.com>

<http://angelethanpaulmiller.bravehost.com>

Ethan's symbol is a rubber duckie.

Michelle Brooks and Mario Vidal, Sr.'s son, Mario Vidal, Jr. (9-16-88) was murdered, 8-6-04.

My name is Michelle Brooks and I found the information about your newsletter on the Children of the Dome website. Our family recently suffered the tragic loss of our 15-year-old son. He was murdered, and his senseless death has left us devastated. We also have another son who is serving his country in Iraq. It was heartbreaking to summon him home and inform him that his only brother had been killed. The other children in our family are girls ages 11, 4, and 8 months. We are currently dealing with the emotions of losing our son, seeing our only other son returned to the war zone, dealing with the judicial system and just trying to get by day to day. I find it hard to reach out during this time, so I haven't attended any support groups yet. I am blessed to have one friend who has remained a constant and who has given me spiritual direction. She bought me Rosemary Smith's book and emailed me her website.

Thank you so much for sending my address to Rosemary Smith; both her book and your newsletters have been so helpful during this difficult time. I read Jim's page and was touched by his story, what a fine young gentleman. The work that both you and Rosemary Smith are doing to make sure that your children and all others are not forgotten is extraordinary. No one but a grieving parent knows how important that is.

Your most current newsletter was very helpful as I am struggling with the anticipation of the holidays. Not only is it that time of the year, but it is also my birthday, my husband's birthday, my other son's 21st birthday, and my 4-year-old daughter's birthday. I am an only child, so we usually celebrate our birthdays and the holidays together as a family (just the 7 of us). This year we will be without Mario, and it is also the first year that Anthony will not be home for Christmas. Since he has been in the Army, he has always been able to come home for the holidays. Unfortunately, he was told that his leave for his brother's memorial was considered his leave for the year. I am not in the

mood to celebrate because the pain is unbearable, but at the same time, I have younger children that I must think about.

Mario's symbol is a musical note.

Debra McCalla's daughter, Rachel (10-4-76), died in an auto accident 4-19-00.

Deb would like for you to visit Rachel's two websites:

<http://www.geocities.com/rachelmccalla/>

<http://rachelmccalla.tripod.com/>

Rachel's symbols are a red bird and a dove.

Audrey Williamson's son, Richie (2-6-85), completed suicide, 9-21-01.

Audrey would like for you to visit Richie's website: <http://audrey61.topcities.com/>
Audrey explained her choice of a symbol for Richie:

Richie was born at Cannon AFB in Clovis, New Mexico. He was the older of 2 boys. Both his dad and I were Air Force. He always smiled and was a happy baby. From the very beginning Richie loved to draw. I knew right then, he would have some kind of career in design or architecture. In 1994, he was accepted into SCAPA, (School for the Arts). Because we were going to move, he had to decline. He would have been a good one. He was so hurt. He played baseball and football, and couldn't wait till deer season just so he could hunt with his dad. He loved the outdoors. He would sit in that stand all day. His first deer was in 1997. Boy, was he proud!

He loved to hunt, so I use a deer as his symbol. I have an "In Memory of Richard H. Williamson, III" on my car, and also "Prevent Teen Suicide" on my car in honor of him.

Richie's symbols are a red bird and a dove.

**Jackie Searl's son, Alex (10-13-65), died from a heart arrhythmia 6-7-96.
Her son, Dan (4-6-61), died from an inoperable brain tumor, 4-30-00.**

Jackie tells of how she is ministering to others:

I think in past correspondence, I have mentioned how, upon hearing of others who find themselves on this journey road, in memory of Dan & Alex, my two sons that passed in 1996 and 2000, I send a copy of Charlie Walton's book, When There Are No Words, in their memory and ask that when they are able, they reach out and do the same...for me this is part of my on-going healing program. I have met two other moms who have also lost one of their children and we have become friends and about every six weeks, we meet for lunch and just talk, share and remember things about our kids, cry together, laugh and it is such a wonderful time in their memory...I hope others will try this. It is so important to reach out to help if you can. We are not in this alone; God, family, love of friends and support of others that "know this journey" are there to help. I think at those times when I learn of sudden, tragic, unexplainable loss, that is when I most feel what my purpose, mission and responsibility to my fellow brother, sister is about...to reach out and let them know they are not in this alone. I order these books directly from the publisher and keep about twelve on hand.

Today I am presenting one to a client of ours, who has a sister-in-law that lost her only child 20 years ago and husband within the past five years. She has chosen to go into her shell and close the door. Please keep her in your prayers, and my hope is that the information that we have pulled together for our client to present to her will open the door for her. I am always reminded of this saying...Pain Is Inevitable, Misery Is Optional...

We will celebrate with Thanksgiving and Christmas the wonder of all the gifts God has so richly given, Dan & Alex, the memories that are everlasting...no day is ever over if it holds a memory. We get two balloons with happy faces or a fish or whatever the boys enjoyed. Dan was Air force, so a flag or plane and on these holidays, birthdays and anniversary of their going home we release their balloons at sunset and watch them until we can no longer see them.

I hope these suggestions will be helpful to others.

I receive so much personal healing when I reach out...my prayer and wish is for others that are hurting so, will come to realize, that in the precious memory of their loved ones, they too, will come to recognize they have something to share, give and pass on in their loved one's memory. Their memory will always remain "alive with us" when we are giving, caring and loving others on this journey. My favorite saying is "Remember to look out for each other as we cross the streets of life". Steve Tiller

Alex's symbols are a deer and fish. Dan's is his dog, Buddy.

Bill and Debra Moulton's son, Michael (1-12-86), completed suicide, 11-16-02.

The following article was written about Bill's ministry:

By SUSAN WHEELDON
Courier Journal Staff Writer

Somerset resident Bill Moulton hopes to help others become more aware of the signs of one of the leading causes of death of people age 15 to 24, so they don't have to go through what he and his family have.

On Nov. 16, 2002, after a fun filled day of shopping he and his wife, and two other children came home to find that their son and brother had died of suicide at 16-years-old. On that Saturday, he and the family were to go out to dinner and go shopping, but his 16-year-old son Michael said he didn't want to go on this occasion. Michael said he wanted to stay home and have the house to himself.

Moulton said this didn't seem odd since he had a brother and a sister, so they left for their outing and Michael stayed home. Several hours later they returned home to find that he had killed himself.

Moulton said at the time Michael, who was bipolar seemed fine, but now looking back he wonders if there were signs he and others missed. "I can understand other causes of death, but the comprehension of suicide is complete devastation," said Moulton. "The ramifications are terrible."

Suicide is the third leading cause of death for people age 15 to 24 and is the 11th leading cause of death in the United States with one suicide occurring on average every 17 minutes, according to the American Association of Suicidology. Deaths by suicide add up to 30,000 a year, which leaves 4.45 million survivors left to deal with the effects.

The top ten causes of death include heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic lower respiratory diseases, accidents, diabetes, influenza and pneumonia, Alzheimer's disease, kidney disease and septicemia.

The rate of youth suicide (ages 15-24) has increased more than 200 percent from the 1950's to the late 1970's. Since the 70's to the mid 1990's, suicide rates for youth have remained stable and more recently have slightly decreased. Relative to those younger, rates of suicide are highest among the elderly (ages 65 and over).

Suicide does not necessarily hit one type of person, but there are generally higher rates of suicide among those with mental health diagnoses, those who deal with depression, schizophrenia, drug and/or chemical dependency and conduct disorders (in adolescence). Also, there is a relationship between alcoholism and suicide.

Moulton tries to make sense of his son's death by promoting suicide prevention at work and home. He addresses suicide prevention and inmate suicide prevention, where he works at the federal prison in Pine Knot.

For Moulton he believes knowledge starts with awareness, so he goes to workplaces, school administrators and others and makes the presentations on suicide.

"My son had a purpose in life," said Moulton. "... my son had a lot to give." He said suicide is something he feels parents often don't address with their children. Moulton said parents will address issues such as drugs, alcohol and other types of safety, but any conversation about suicide is left unspoken.

As part of the presentation Moulton gives, he explains the question many people ask when they think about suicide: "The why... Imagine yourself being chased by wild snarling blood-thirsty dogs...These dogs are loneliness, anger, fear, sadness, grief, loss, blame,

humiliation, failure, depression, mental illness... They chase you to the end of a cliff... Do you fight or jump?"

Also, in his presentation he says: "We (the parents or loved ones) ask not for your sympathy, we ask that you help to make a difference." Suicide prevention week was Sept. 5-11. The goal was to promote awareness and advocacy about suicide prevention across the globe. This year's theme was "Working Together to Save Lives" recognizes both the width and depth of the problem of suicide worldwide, along with the critical need for all of us to work together in coordinated fashion in order to design and implement effective suicide prevention programs.

Moulton said if anyone has an interest in him speaking or would like more information, they can contact him at billbop47@aol.com

For more information on suicide, people can go to the American Association of Suicidology's website at www.suicidology.org , the National Organization for People of Color Against Suicide at www.nopcas.com or National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars

Susan 9/6/04

A person might be suicidal if he or she:

- * Talks about committing suicide*
- * Has trouble eating or sleeping*
- * Experiences drastic changes in behavior*
- * Withdraws from friends and/or social activities*
- * Loses interest in hobbies, work, school, etc.*
- * Prepares for death by making out a will and final arrangement*
- * Gives away prized possessions*
- * Has attempted suicide before*
- * Takes unnecessary risks*
- * Has had recent severe losses*
- * Is preoccupied with death and dying*
- * Loses interest in their personal appearance*
- * Increases their use of alcohol or drugs*

What to do

- * Be direct. Talk openly and matter-of-factly about suicide.*
- * Be willing to listen. Allow expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.*
- * Be nonjudgmental. Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or feelings are good or bad. Don't lecture on the value of life.*
- * Get involved. Become available. Show interest and support.*
- * Don't dare him or her to do it.*
- * Don't act shocked. This will put distance between you.*
- * Don't be sworn to secrecy. Seek support.*
- * Offer hope that alternatives are available, but do not offer glib reassurance.*

*** *Facts on suicide came from the American Association of Suicidology*

Michael's symbol is an eagle.

Donnie and Donna Brown's son, Donovan (11-17-76), died in an auto-truck accident, 10-22-00.

Thank you for your kind notes you always send in relation to our son Donovan. He would have been 28 on Nov. 17; I find myself wondering what he would be doing now and where he would be. Then I realize I never have to wonder because he is in Heaven watching over us and waiting for our time to join him. If I didn't believe this, I couldn't breathe. Oh, but how we wish we could have him back with us and go back to our normal lives. Making a new normal for family is so very difficult. But I know you are painfully aware of this as well.

I think about you often and how you are coping. You have helped so many and I want you to know that I am so grateful for what you do. Grief is so difficult and it is never the same for anyone.

Donovan's symbol is a lizard.

Eddie & Sue Tutt's daughter, Julie Howell (3-3-64), died of a brain hemorrhage, 1-9-03.

I received this from a lady at the Life Center workshop I attended in Cincinnati. It made me so proud of Julie that she planned ahead and signed the donor registry several years before she died. We are all planning to do the same when our time comes - if we can. I have learned that Organ donors are a special, revered group. Only one out of 900 deaths result in organ donation and only one in 100 who sign the donor card actually get to do it when they die.

The quilt including Julie's special remembrance square was unveiled and it was the most beautiful I have ever seen. It will hang along side 3 other quilts in the Cincinnati Life Center for all to see for years to come.

Sunday is Donor Sabbath (December 14) is a day of remembrance honoring all those who have cared enough to give the very, very best of life. I urge the rest of you to consider what you can give.

(It brought so much comfort to us that Young Jim was an organ donor)

This poem was read at the dedication:

To Remember Me

At a certain moment a doctor will determine that my brain has ceased to function and that for all intents and purposes, my life has stopped.

When that happens, do not attempt to instill artificial life into my body by the use of a machine. And don't call this my "deathbed." Call it my "bed of life," and let my body be taken from it to help others lead fuller lives.

Give my sight to a man who has never seen a sunrise, a baby's face, or the love in the eyes of a woman.

Give my heart to a person whose own heart has caused nothing but endless days of pain.

Give my blood to the teenager who has been pulled from the wreckage of his car, so that he might live to see his grandchildren play.

Give my kidneys to one who depends on a machine to exist from week to week.

Take my bones, every muscle, every fiber and nerve in my body and find a way to make a crippled child walk.

Explore every corner of my brain. Take my cells, if necessary, and let them grow so that someday a speechless boy will shout at the crack of a bat and a deaf girl will hear the sound of rain against her windows.

Burn what is left of me and scatter the ashes to the winds to help the flowers grow.

If you must bury something, let it be my faults, my weaknesses and all my prejudice against my fellow man.

Give my soul to God. If by chance you wish to remember me, do it with a kind deed or word to someone who needs you. If you do all I have asked, I will live forever.

Author Unknown

Julie's symbols are a rainbow and a rooster.

Brenda Reeves was legal guardian of her nephew, Jay Jacobson (7-31-78), and her favorite cousin, Terry Barnhart (1-1-54); both complete suicide, Jay, 3-4-02, and Terry, 4-17-79.

Brenda is involved in many ministries to help those who are grieving as a result of suicide in their family, or those who may be contemplating suicide. She shared these awards with us:

Dear Friends,

SMHAI is proud to announce that the SMHAI (Suicide and Mental Health Association International) Awards Program has been rated by 3 of the major Award Ethics, Credentialing, and/or Monitoring Groups and are listed with a few others... There are several others evaluating the SMHAI Awards Program site for rating, also.

Ratings since 10-15-2004:

3.0 at Award Sites!

1.0 at WebsAwards

Alpha at UWSAG

This means that other major webmasters have put a value on SMHAI Awards. They feel that the award is one of honor and by displaying the SMHAI Award, it also tells other webmasters that your site met or exceeded some very rigorous criteria.

If you own a website, memorial or otherwise, SMHAI encourages you to apply.

Commercial and non-profit sites are also welcome to apply.

SMHAI has awards for sites with medical content.

Not all sites that apply, will win the first time out but you will never know if your site has what it takes until you apply.

The key to winning any award is to be sure to read all of the award program information.... it may seem senseless to the applicant, but it is all there for a reason.

To apply:

<http://suicideandmentalhealthassociationinternational.org/smhaiawards.html>

Good luck to all that apply!

Jay's Memorial Site: <http://www.geocities.com/alidavanlieshout/>

Jay's 2004 Valentine: <http://mylovelygarden.com/jayhtml>

Memory Tree of Lights: http://www.memorytrees.org/coordinators/brenda_reeves.htm

Suicide and Mental Health Association International (SMHAI):

<http://suicideandmentalhealthassociationinternational.org>

Jay's symbol is a dove with a red rose in its beak.

Terry's symbols are a beautiful heart and leather jacket because when Brenda thinks of him, she thinks of love and the leather jacket because he never went anywhere without it even if it was hot outside.

Cindy Hughes' son, Josh (4-30-82), was killed in an auto accident, 11-7-03.

Cindy shared how they observed Josh's first angel date:

Josh's memorial was very beautiful, but very sad and heartbreaking at the same time. The weather here was about 65 degrees, sunny and a clear sky. The service was held at a lake in our area, with the chairs set next to the water. There is a beautiful gazebo that overlooks the water with a pier extending over the water. We had luminaries extending on the pier and along the pathway leading to it. The inside of the gazebo was decorated with photos of Josh and family, lit candles, flowers and Josh's urn. There were 2 stands with vases of pink roses on the entrance with baskets of flower petals sitting outside.

My friend, minister and spiritual counselor performed the service for me as he did one year before. After his uplifting and moving talk, Josh was remembered by loving

words, memories and poems by loving family and friends. I began, barely able to speak, with tears streaming down my face as I remembered and missed my only son so very much. My youngest sister, Josh's godmother, followed with his sister, his girlfriend, cousin, and several of his closest and dearest friends. Music was played before and during the service with Cindy Bullens', "Somewhere Between Heaven and Earth," one of my favorites. After my daughter finished speaking, we all carried our balloons out to the pier and released them as the song, "I Can't Cry Hard Enough" played. We then threw rose petals or whole roses into the water as each person privately said a prayer, a memory or just spoke to Josh.

Afterwards, many of his family and friends came to our home to remember Josh and his life. I managed to keep my composure at that time but afterwards, when everyone was gone, the tears I had silently cried came rushing out. I still cannot comprehend that one year and 9 days have passed since that horrible night. In some ways it feels like forever and in other ways, like only yesterday. For me, the pain does not get easier but harder with each passing day.

I just wanted to share Josh's service with you and thank you once again for all your kindness.

I was mostly touched that everyone had the same feelings and memories of Josh. It wasn't individual stories, but the fact that everyone spoke of his constant smile, his infectious laugh and his joy of life and living every day to the fullest. How he enjoyed life and all that it offered him. It used to worry me that he had such a noncommittal attitude about work, but I am now glad that he did the things that brought so much fun and happiness into his life.

I have been thinking a lot about a sign for Josh as I read all the past issues of the newsletter you sent me. I think I have made a decision on a **dove** for Josh. The urn that contains his ashes has several doves circling in flight on it. I have become interested in the afterlife since Josh's accident and would like to share a story with you that helped me decide on this symbol. On November 5, 2004, 2 days before Josh's one-year anniversary, November 7, I had a phone reading with a spiritualist that several other bereaved moms had recommended to me. During the course of this conversation, he told me that a white feather, a white bird, a white dove, outside bird would be at some sort of anniversary. It was a validation of my son's presence, that he would be there with us. For 2 nights I kept asking Josh to have a white dove land on the gazebo at the service for him on Sunday or to be there somehow so I would know he was with me. During the service, I looked up and a white dove was flying over the water for all of us to see. No other birds were in sight. I touched my sister's arm and showed her the dove, as she had been present for the phone reading. My older sister did not know anything about it, but showed the bird to her daughter who was aware of it's meaning. I felt then that it was Josh's way of letting me know he was with us all that day as he is with me always even though I have a hard time feeling it and believing it at times.

For this reason I choose a white dove for Josh's symbol. I looked the meaning up on some websites and found various meanings for the dove. They were: love, gentleness, kindness, peace, calm and simplicity. My Josh did indeed have these traits. Thank you so much for thinking of us, it means a great deal to me.

It seems my life is constantly filled with heartache and drama at all times. Some days I don't want to answer the phone or door or even get the mail. My fiancé's Mother died on December 22 and I had to have Josh's pet Corgi put o sleep on New Year's Day. He was 12 and a half, diabetic, blind but my faithful companion through the separation of Josh's Dad and through Josh's leaving me. He was always by my side no matter what. It was losing another link to my sweet Josh.

*I am still waiting on approval of our request for federal tax exemption for the foundation I started in Josh's memory and honor. It is named The **J.O.S.H.** Foundation-**Joining Others Seeking Hope.** Our first project planned is an Angel of Hope statue in our community.*

Thank you for your kindness and support through these seemingly never-ending difficult times. I do not have much support from my family and few true friends. I am doing my best to do things to keep Josh's memory alive, I hate the thought of him being forgotten and people acting as if his life was unimportant.

Josh's symbol is a dove.

James and Dawn Vinson's son, Matt (8-25-01), died from an accident, 9-15-03.

I have received several emails from the family and wanted to share them with you:

Dear friends and Family,

I know this time of season is very difficult for us all. I know the things we would rather be doing with our children instead of what some of us do. I, myself, would love to take Matthew out in the snow and make a snow angel, but instead I have to look to the sky and hope my angel Matt is helping to make it snow, so that when a snow flake falls on my face I can think of it as a frozen tear drop letting me know he is watching over me.

Anyway, I just wanted to wish you all a good Holiday and a good New Year. And as we celebrate, let us remember our loved ones that blessed us while they were here and remember the things and the people that we are still blessed with. Have a safe and good journey if you travel this season. May God Bless You All!!!!!!

Love you all,

James and Dawn Vinson

Please Visit

www.vinsons-n-angels.com

Matt's symbols are butterflies, an owl, bus, bee & fries; anything yellow and balloons and bubbles.

Leann Butler and the late William Douglas Butler's son, Scott (3-10-78) died, 7-16-04.

Leann shares Scott's story:

**DOUGLAS SCOTT BUTLER
MARCH 10, 1978 – JULY 16, 2004
Son of Leann J. Butler and William Douglas Butler (Deceased)**

Scott was from the country – hills covered with kudzu, hollers, strip mines and fields of golden-rods. He was from country music, banjo picking, guitar playing, fiddle tunes, and old time gospel songs. He was from Doug and Leann, his father's pride and his mother's heart. He was from Poppaw, Me-meem, Mammaw, Paw, Mammy, aunts and uncles, all with big ideas and dreams. He was from togetherness, encouragement and forgiveness of his fellow man.

Scott was from fishing in the pond, riding the tractor with Poppaw, mowing with dad on the old John Deere mower, and living out his dream of being a Navy Captain on the high seas.

He was from Tee Ball, GI Joe, Smurfs, Atari, Commodore, Boy Scouts, Climbing trees, Nascar, football, Star Wars, and "BO" from the Dukes of Hazard.

Scott was from "do your best," "don't give up," "always be proud," and "trust in the Lord." He was from old time church songs – "What a Friend," "Amazing Grace," "Old Rugged Cross," and his favorite hymn, "I'll Fly Away."

Scott was from pinto beans and cornbread, "tator salad," steak, pizza, banana pudding, and Mountain Dew.

He was from remembering his ancestors, his Aunt Joy's old pictures and his Aunt Hazel's mountain home with a fire in the grate on Christmas Eve.

Scott was from doctors, the diagnosis of a dreaded disease, blood tests, therapy machines, medications, despair, lost footsteps, loss of activity, and lost dreams of tomorrow.

He was from the loss of his grandparents, the loss of his beloved great Aunt and Uncle and the loss of his dearest friend – his dad.

He was from strength, endurance, encouragement, well-meaning friends, will power, faith and hope for a cure.

Scott was a World War II history buff, the recipient of a dream come true from CBS Week of Wishes – his longtime desire to visit Pearl Harbor and see the USS Arizona. The trip was bittersweet, filled with tears, sadness, awe, but he was happy, and he was able to

walk, with a little assistance, onto the landing and up to the memorial where he stood proudly with tears in his eyes.

He was an Angel, conceived from the love of his mother and dad. He was a star that shined brightly and was gone, oh so quickly. He was the first “boy,” the first “grandchild,” he fulfilled so many dreams. He was gentle, kind, had a beautiful smile, curly hair, and eyes that twinkled when he laughed. He loved his dad and he loved me – I loved him with all my being and he knew that. We were devoted to each other and nothing made me happier than caring for him – he was my child, my soul, and my reason for going on. He tried so hard to take care of me, reminding me all the time to watch my weight, exercise and keep strong. I would gladly have traded my life for his had it been possible.

Scott was the bravest person that I have ever met, read about, or seen. He faced each day with happiness and was thankful for it, not at all complaining like me. Even in his darkest hours he didn't complain. He planned for the future and someday having a family of his own. Life is hard and cruel sometimes and there are many things we don't understand. I will never understand why such a person as Scott would be taken away when he had so much to offer. He inspired so many – young and old. I have had young people tell me that he was the reason they got up and came to school – if Scott could do it, they could. His encouragement and inspiration to young people was phenomenal. What a wonderful dad he would have been – he was dependable, strong, one of deep respect and faith.

I once believed in miracles. Deep in my heart I felt that God had cured Scott. He had outlived the prognosis, was doing fine, and he refused to give up. I just knew that he was going to be okay even when the doctors told me he wasn't.

When Scott passed, I saw him meet his dad. I was never one to believe in visions, but when he died, I saw them together. Doug put his arm around Scott's shoulder and they started walking down a road – Scott was walking – Praise the Lord. The grass on each side of the road was such a bright green, and the road led to a grove of trees. I know in my heart that God gave me the vision to let me know that Scott was with Him and his daddy. Thank you God – Thank You for letting me know that he was safe, he is not suffering, he is walking, and he is not struggling for every breath. In my mind I knew that he would leave this world someday, and I tried hard to accept it. But, my heartstrings will just not let go. I am selfish, I know, in wanting him to be with me, but I am his mom, it isn't supposed to be this way. I am supposed to be the one to go – not my baby.

Now, Scott is gone, life goes on and I am trying to exist. I will live each day for Scott – I will “just be” until I see him again. He is in the wind, the stars, and the air that I breathe, he is my very heartbeat – he truly is the wind beneath my wings.

In remembering Scott, I am comforted by the following words from Henry Ward Beecher:

*E'en for the dead I will not bind my soul to grief;
Death cannot long divide.
For is it not as though the rose that climbed my garden wall
Has blossomed on the other side?
Death does hide,*

*But not divide;
You are but on Christ's other side!
You are with Christ, and Christ with me;
In Christ united still are we.*

I give you joy, my sweet, sweet child – Love, Mom

Scott's symbol is an Eagle.

Joe and Barbara Jurgensen's son, Joey (10-17-72) died from an auto accident, 10-13-98.

Barbara wrote the following note:

Your cards, interest in the lost children and your caring continues to bring me comfort. Joey is always on my mind and I think of all the fun and joy we shared!

Joey's symbols are golf clubs and Buddha.

Karen Jenkins' son, Geoff (5-6-84) died from an overdose, 5-22-02.

Please get to know Geoff by visiting his website and reading about the many ways the family has remembered Geoff.

<http://wtv-zone.com/Blulady/memorials/GeoffInMemory.html>

Geoff's symbol is an angel with pink wings.

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

We hope this finds you well and Christmas a new goodness. I now have found some space to connect to those I wish to connect to. I hope you know my absence from emailing was filled with mourning and reading, let alone living on the surface that requires so much limited energy. So many changes Dinah. I continue to remember how kind all those at Cumberland College were to Tom and myself last winter in those full numbing days after Joe's death. We remain intact but still mourning. I have put to print our Christmas without Joe. Below tells our story a little, in my eyes.

Thank You Dinah

Kathy Hinton

Although our son Joe died the 20th of December of 2003 our first Christmas without him was this Christmas. We were not mentally and emotionally present the 24 and 25th of December last year. We have no recall and I was not able to journal, to write and think at the same time. We lost that holiday; it was not part of our world. It was this Christmas that the impact of our loss presented itself. The excess space given by Joe's death made room for a sadness and void. We exchanged gifts and were grateful for each one. We worshiped and spoke words of holiday cheer and nibbled on a holiday meal. We had a miniature tree that sat in the back of a table. We had a string of white lights draped somewhere in the family room. We did not spend excess time in bed or weep with emotional outcries. We were calm and quiet and able to walk through the evening. The gift of an Official Star Registry in Joe's name was an amazing gift that came out of Joe's sister's heart, a heart that has been pulled and stretched, shattered and yet strong. This gift gave us a needed focus on him that the evening required. It helped provide a kind of affirmation of what was not said but so tenderly felt. It released something and allowed a welcome to Joe, to grief and to a celebration of sorts. There was gratitude we had for each other, that although always there, was not as significant as it was this Christmas. These were the Christmas activities we chose.

Christmas day we spent with our son's second family. Kyle was Joe's close friend and one of the young men who died with Joe, leaving his family, as ours, facing the holidays with confusing expectations. Our gathering with them provided a Christmas of safely spoken memories. There was an exchanging of photos, books and letters that represented our love of them. Speaking of them and calling their names without reservation felt so good. Missing them and wanting them without feeling lonely in it was restful. This year we needed an alternative Christmas and we were given this day of rest.

A year has passed and now the numbness and shock are wearing off and the moving into the grief dance is being established. It is now in these last weeks, that yet a new form of grief is here, not unlike a gray cloud forming in the distance. It is a grief cloud that represents the uncertain, a storm or low-pressure movement, drizzle or downpour. It is something but will not show itself until later.

There will come a time of good memories and clean love exchanged between our family and Joe. He will be with us in a new and calming and perhaps supportive way. That time will come. It is forming now. It may bring us transformed spirits and a wiser sense of the abstract. It will personify the mercies and extraordinary grace of God. We will have better hindsight of Footprints in the Sand. For now we remain a family in a kind of sad sluggish existence, committing to move toward the future and what it will hold. We are requiring little from each other, yet quietly needing more. Grief will have its way and for each hour and day and week we cooperated with it or buff it away it remains committed to us. It will be with us, so perhaps we can integrate its fruit and live more clearly and authentically. Tom, Molly and I remain a family sustaining and building our lives. We love and miss Joe and miss all the possibilities with him we had hoped to have in the future. Much of the time Joe's death does not seem real, but it is. So we had our first Christmas without him and we will go on.

This note was written later:

I wonder how the relationship with our deceased loved ones changes over the years? It is over a year now since Joe's death, and although there is some kind of space, I have not yet reattached to him in a new way. I just remain sad and amazed he is gone.

Joe was an avid Falcon Football fan. I wrote to the fan club in which he was a part for so many years. They placed the letter in their September issue of their newsletter. You can read this on their website: [Click here to view the newsletter](#)

Joe's symbol is an Atlanta Falcons' symbol.

Debbie Garber's son, Justin Ratliff (6-14-81) died in an auto accident, 5-22-02.

Debbie wrote the following poem:

Mysteries

*In the call of celestial splendor,
Heaven beckons your peaceful surrender.*

*A breath away, yet too far to see.
Embraced in the arms of eternity.*

*Holding in my tender dreams,
Thoughts of you by gentle streams.*

*Brilliant rainbows fill the skies,
Reflecting the radiance in your eyes.*

*Joined through spirit and physically parted,
Bound to return to where we started.*

*Love's pure light we are destined to be
Side by side in life's mysteries.*

Justin's symbol is a deer.

Tony and Jean Varlese's son, Tony, Jr. (2-9-62) completed suicide, 11-27-97.

The following poem was sent as their Christmas card with a picture of Tony, Jr. on the front:

His Song I Sing

*As the robins chirp a lullaby,
And the sparrows lull a tune,
I will always sing your praise,
In the brightness of the sun, and the glow of the moon.*

*My notes play the melody,
My lyrics speak of love,
May they both reach the heavens,
On the span and wings of a dove.*

*I hope you heard this song I sent,
To all we hold so dear,
The music is just a magic way,
To bring a smile and wipe a tear.*

*The longest verse I ever wrote,
From the day of birth to the very end,
I hope you know this tribute was made
By those you loved, family and friends.*

*They say that "all the world's a stage,"
It is true for all to see and hear,
The song of love I penned for only you,
So I will always have you here.*

Mom & Dad

Tony Jr's symbol is "our angel."

Fred and Marilyn Zimmerman's son, Eric (11-22-77) died in an auto accident, 12-21-97.

Fred tells of how they are doing and how they are giving back in Eric's name:

So nice to get your card and mention of our Eric on his transition date.

We continue to receive pennies and signs and visits from Eric and several are in books; the latest "God's Gift of Love" by Christine Duninal, has several of his penny stories.

Marilyn and I volunteer at the Hospice and our first patient, John, believed in the afterlife and came back to give me a loud and clear message the day after his death. At 4:00 in the morning, I was awakened with his voice that repeatedly said, "Here I am, here I am" and stopped after I told him "thanks and I would pass the message to his daughter and wife." Amazing!!!

Eric's symbol is a frog.

David and Emma Keen's son, Jonathan (10-22-77) died in an auto accident, 10-15-03.

David and Emma want all to get to know Jonathan.

On October 22, 1977, a beautiful, beautiful, baby boy came into this world and touched many people in a profound way. Jonathan brought great joy to everyone he touched during his short lifetime.

Tragically, Jonathan was lost in an automobile accident on October 15, 2003, one week before his 26th birthday.

In remembering Jonathan, one of his good friends said, "Never a dull moment with Jonathan." Jonathan made life exciting and fun for everyone; he always had a smile on his face.

Jonathan was:

A dear child of God

The "favorite" only beloved son of Emma L. and David W. Keen

A special nephew to many aunts and uncles

A prized great-nephew to many great aunts and great uncles

A fun cousin to many, many, cousins

A true friend to many

A loving husband to his wife, Shanda D. Keen

A compassionate father to his 10-month-old daughter, Emily Paige Keen

And one of NASCAR's greatest fans

Jonathan may best be remembered for his charming personality and his natural, stunning smile.

Jonathan was so diverse that he has three symbols: A smile, NASCAR, and a rainbow.

Pat Gregory's son, Justin Dickson (1-23-82), died in an auto accident, 4-7-00.

Pat sent me a picture of Justin and explained:

Justin was 15 years old in this picture. Don't let the braids fool you, he was a "lamb." There is a funny story about his braids. Justin wore braids because at that time they had become popular with males.

One morning Justin came to me and said, "Mom, can you take my braids out, people keep coming up to me and thinking I'm a thug." So I took them out.

Justin was a very special young man.

Justin's symbol is a car.

Cheryl George's son, Brad Huskey (4-11-77), was murdered, 6-29-00.

Cheryl tells Bradley's story:

Dear Dinah,

It has been four long years since we met at Hamilton Place Mall during the release of Rosemary Smith's book, Children of the Dome. I cannot begin to thank you enough for the cards I have received over the past four years. You once asked me to send you a story about Brad and a picture. I find it easy to talk about Brad and find myself wrapped up in conversation telling his stories to everyone I come in contact with and I don't know why it has taken me so long to write you.

As you remember, Brad Huskey was murdered 6-29-00 at the age of 23 while on the job with UPS in Chattanooga. It took 3 long years for his assailant to come to trial. The sentencing in Brad's case was 3-3-03 and we just recently went through another court hearing for a motion for a new trial. Harold Holloway was found guilty of second-degree murder, which was a disappointment to all of us. I have been greatly disappointed in the emotional support UPS offered our family.

I cannot begin to tell you how anguishing the trial was. The trial began with the District Attorney playing the 911 calls that came in from the accident scene. It was just horrible listening to the panic in everyone's voices as they described my son being murdered. The coroner's report was just as terrible. Many people over the 3 years while we awaited the trial and the numerous delays, as the defendant fired and hired 3 attorneys, could not believe the justice system and how the defendants get all the breaks and the victims seem to have no rights. But frankly, with every delay, I was relieved somewhat because I could delay the realization of the brutality involved in my son's death and the expressions of fear on his face that one witness testified to during the trial.

The jurors were not allowed to hear that Brad was in his last semester at UTC. He had already applied to sit for his CPA exam prior to his death. Or the fact he had planned

to attend law school at Ole Miss. One of Brad's fellow classmates who was an older female in his accounting class began a petition for him to receive his post humus degree. The Chancellor at UTC invited the family and as many of Brad's close friends who wanted to attend a breakfast honoring Brad prior to the graduation ceremony. I think there were about 35 of us there that day. Brad's sister, Courtney, sat in his place in the auditorium in his cap and gown and walked across the stage to accept his degree. The student who began the petition said Brad always treated her with such respect. She said as an older student, most of the younger students would not have much to say to her. She said Brad would always graciously invite her to study sessions or pair up with her when they were required to work on projects. I told her that may have been because I was a late life student. I attained my degree in nursing while working 40 hours a week and attending a night nursing program.

The jurors were also not allowed to be informed that Brad was filling in for a co-worker the day he was killed. Brad did not often make deliveries; he worked in the pre-sort area of UPS, usually going to work at 5 pm and getting off around 10:30 pm. He worked at the hub in the presort department. This particular day, he was working for a friend who could not go on vacation without getting his shifts covered and Brad was running his route for him. It was felt if the jurors were allowed to hear these outstanding qualities Brad possessed, it would evoke sympathy from the jurors.

The jurors deliberated 7 hours before coming back with the second-degree murder sentence. It was gut wrenching waiting those hours for the verdict. At one time, we had to re-enter the courtroom for them to discuss Involuntary Manslaughter. It may have been possible for the defendant to be released with time served if he had received this conviction. The defense had a doctor testify that Holloway murdered my son as a result of cocaine-induced psychosis. Holloway had a history of 18 criminal arrests and was arrested a week prior to killing Brad for cocaine possession. The defendant has never displayed or voiced any remorse related to Brad's death.

The trial was supposed to bring closure; however, I am not sure if that has come. We have good days and some that continue to be unbearable. Brad's birthday is 4/11/77. His sister, Courtney's birthday is 4/4/75. They were 2 years and one week apart. We always celebrated their birthdays together on the weekend between. Courtney continues to find it difficult to celebrate without her brother. This year their birthdays were on the weekend and we celebrated on Courtney's date and Brad's date happened to be Easter. We got a birthday cake for that day as well, except we put her son's name on it, Bradley. Of course Brad was killed 3 days after my birthday and I cannot forget the kiss on my cheek that day and his words as we departed in the parking lot of the restaurant where he took me to lunch.

Bradley David Garland was born 12/4/01. He is the light of my life. I'm sure I don't need to tell you how spoiled he is. We thought he was never supposed to cry or want for anything. With his growth and development I am reminded of my son's life and all the wonderful memories.

We continue to get together with Brad's friends. We began meeting on a monthly basis. Then it was a quarterly get-together. Now four years later, we get together on 6/29, the day of his death. It was great hearing from his friends. Some knew "Brad Stories" that

I did not remember. There were about 25 of his classmates who met us at one of his favorite places this summer. We did not formally invite people. Courtney told two of his friends and they began a chain of phone calls. It is difficult to see his friends group up and mature having careers of their own, wives and families. I had imagined all of those things for Brad. One of Brad's friends, Michael, has taken on a role as brother to Courtney. Although Courtney often reminds me she is thankful for his friendship, but he will never replace her Bubba.

When I met you at the bookstore with Rosemary, I told you of an encounter Courtney had with Brad in heaven. She had gone to the Birkenstock Outlet to buy a pair of shoes like Bubba's before they were discontinued. A Dave Mathews song (he was their favorite artist) came on the radio and Brad appeared to her in heaven. Brad was walking on a woodland trail holding wild animals and releasing birds from his hand. Courtney recalls the beautiful fragrant smell of heaven and Brad's reassurance to her that he was okay. She has since had several other meetings with Brad and has noted them in a journal.

I guess I have said enough about my grief. There are not enough keystrokes to tell of my loss and Brad's life. I have included a picture of Brad that I placed in an ornament that was hung on a wreath in the Capitol Building in Nashville, TN, during Christmas 2003. The Governor invited us to the Capitol for a ceremony honoring victims of crime. My daughter commented that she had never been in a place where there were so many people gathered with joy and grief. The picture was made at my wedding. Brad was actually holding my wedding bouquet and we cropped the picture. UPS hung the picture on a plaque in their terminal a year following Brad's death, but they have since removed the picture and the plaque. This was difficult for me that the memory of his death could be dismissed so quickly. I guess it was bad business for their customers to be reminded of his death in the performance of his duties.

Brad's symbols are a butterfly and a dragonfly.

Neal and Dee Dee Davis' daughter, Samantha Grace (11-17-81), died as a result of San Filippo A Syndrome, 9-21-94.

Dee Dee wrote:

Dear Dinah, my fellow traveler,

I apologize that it has taken me this long to write about Samantha. The disease that Samantha had was that her body did not metabolize an enzyme, or complex sugars, so they store in every cell of the body. It is genetic. It is very rare. She was born with it, but symptoms do not appear with this disease until the ages between 2 & 4 years. Then, you start to notice things are not right. First thing, hearing, bilateral hearing aids. When she first got them, she would take them apart and put them in the garbage. Once she realized

they helped her, we didn't have that problem. Then glasses; then brain damage which they thought was from respiratory distress at birth; seizures. It took us 4 ½ years to find our answer to her problem. At the time she was diagnosed in 1987, there were only 536 children in the United States with this or a similar variation of this disorder.

Samantha had the mentally capacity of a child between 4 to 5 years of age. Next, is when the bad starts. They start losing everything they have learned, first potty training, speech, the ability to walk, sit up, swallow, etc. This disease does a number on the central nervous system. It slowly eats the brain and as it goes, that's how they lose each function. She lost her speech in November 1989. In June 1990, she became bedfast until her passing. She was on oxygen and a feeding tube. We learned to give her antibiotics and pain shots. Her other meds were put through the feeding tube.

However, 2 things I asked of God through this and He mercifully answered them for me. I asked that I be there when she passed. I would never know if it was peaceful or not and no one would have been able to persuade me, even today. But it was as if she had gone to sleep. We had been up with her since 4:00 am because she was breathing strangely. We loved on her and told her we loved her and everything was okay. It was just like she went to sleep; her eyes were closed and I noticed that I didn't hear that strange sound anymore and I went to the bottom of the bed to see if her chest was moving and she was gone at 5:31 am, September 21, 1994.

Until Samantha became ill, she was always a happy child. She was hyperactive and laughed all the time. She could fall on concrete, get up, wipe herself off and go on her merry way. She loved the Pink Panther cartoon and had a stuffed one. Since she was so active, we called her Pink Panther. She touched so many people in her short little life. She had an unconditional love for everyone. Her Papaw Davis had cancer of the saliva glands and they had to remove them, leaving him with no upper palate or any gums or anything on the lower jaw. His whole face was very deformed and sunken in. The family had worried about what to do, because we could explain it to the other children, but with Samantha's limited mental ability, we couldn't. We took her to see him and she just yelled, "Papaw, Papaw," and crawled right up in his lap like everything was the same as always. She would tell me, "Mommy, I lug you all the time." She also would tell me I was "lugly." One of our jokes was that she thought I was a cross between lovely & ugly. She always wanted her daddy to give her her bath and she somehow knew when 7:00 pm was. She'd say, "Daddy, bath." He's say, "just a minute," second time she came with all her clothes off and said, "Daddy, bath." If that didn't work, we'd hear the water running, but she only knew how to turn on the hot water so he had to get moving.

*There's more I could tell you, but I'll close for now. **Her symbols are Pink Panther and an angel.** I have a Pink Panther tattoo on my left ankle in her memory.*

Pat and Colette Coyne's daughter, Colette (10-10-68), died from melanoma, 10-27-98.

Since Colette's death, the Coyne family has established a foundation to make people more aware of danger of sun to the skin. If you would like to become involved in their

latest initiative which is building dugouts to help protect children because our children are constantly exposed to the sun when playing ball, you can contact them through their website www.ccmac.org This would be a wonderful thing to do in your child's memory for the children in your hometown. Get others involved too.

Colette's symbol is a sunflower.

Colleen Baber's son, Andrew (11-15-81), died from choking on a gummy bear, 1-1-01.

Colleen shares Andrew with us:

I have written some things about Andrew. There is something about him in Sally Silagy's book. It didn't come out exactly like I wrote it, so I was a little disappointed. I also have a special recipe in Down the Cereal Aisle. It is for chocolate éclair cake, which was such a favorite of Andrew's.

I would be very happy to write about him and his love for frogs and how much I miss him every second of the day.

My son, Andrew, absolutely loved frogs and toads his entire life. As a youngster he was always looking under rocks and logs to see what he could find, and he could never resist any type of water that might hold those little creatures he was always on the look out for. Even as a teenager, he would rescue frogs from the pool at his best friends house. On January 1, 2001, Andrew died after choking on a gummy bear. Soon after, I started putting frogs everywhere - little statues, candles, the flag out front, my checks, sheets, pillows, earrings, pins, and even at his gravesite. My kids at school have started giving me frog themed items, and they decorate my classroom. It helps me feel like I am putting little "Andrew" reminders everywhere I look.

In the middle of January 2003 we had quite a bit of snow on the ground. One Sunday afternoon I was cleaning up the dead leaves off of the table that most of my plants are on. As I reached to grab one of the leaves, it hopped away. Needless to say, it gave me quite a jolt. A little frog about the size of a quarter was right there on the table. The people at the pet shop told my daughter they had never heard of anyone finding a frog in their house in the winter in our area (Charlottesville, VA). That summer I took the frog to the house of one of my school friends. She has a little pond in her backyard, and my little frog has grown to adulthood there. He has actually posed for some great pictures and is quite a handsome fellow.

This past summer, two nights before my birthday, I woke up in the middle of the night. I really didn't need to get up to go to the bathroom, but actually felt drawn to get up. I opened the bathroom door and there right next to the sink sat a tiny little frog. This was August, so having frogs around wasn't that unusual, but this frog was upstairs in my house in the bathroom with both doors shut. Also, if it had been anywhere else except right there where the night light shone on it, I would have never seen it. I might also add that I live one street over from the city limits, not out in the country.

I have been feeling very down these last few months. I know a lot of it is just being sick of winter, but I have been missing Andrew so much. Friday evening two weeks ago I was sitting in my kitchen talking to a fellow bereaved mother. As I talked I could look through the dining room into the living room. For some reason I started looking at some silk flowers that were somewhat close to a plant light. They have been there since October, and several times I have thought that I should move them. At that moment I got up and went to move the flowers. As I took something back to put in their place, I thought somehow one of Andrew's tiny frog carvings had been put on the stool where the flowers had been. I went to touch it, and it hopped away. For the first time in weeks I had a big smile on my face and just kept telling Andrew "thank you." That was just the message I needed to once again let me know that he is here with me.

Please know that I do not believe that these frogs have miraculously appeared. I think the two winter ones were hibernating in a Poinsettia or some other plant that I had bought, BUT it is just the fact that I was the one to get those plants and then find the frogs before they went off somewhere and died. I still haven't figured out how the summer frog got upstairs and up on my sink, but it really doesn't matter. I think Andrew helps these things happen, and then I get the little emotional boost that allows me to carry on a little longer without my precious child.

Andrew's symbol is a frog.

Jessica Lewis' son, Lucas (3-4-04), died as a result of SIDS, 6-24-04.

Jessica would like for you to look at Lucas' website:

www.babiesonline.com/babies/1/lucascody/

Jimmy and Ann Simmons' son, Jason (3-17-81), died from a heart defect, 2-19-01.

The Simmons family would like for you to get to know this very special young man. His website is: <http://www.jason-simmons.com>

Jason's symbol is a musical note.

Ted Showalter's son, Jeff (12-9-85), was killed in an auto accident, 9-6-04.

Ted wrote:

My son was a very special young man, he graduated high school in May of 2004. Jeffrey Daniel Showalter was born on December 9, 1985, two years after his mother and I were married. We had a daughter two years later, Jennifer Ann, who was born on September 29, 1987, and we really thought we had everything. Our marriage only made it another three years; we were divorced in October of 1990. I had a good relationship with my kids as a weekend dad and we all seemed to get along. I was remarried in May of 1992. Since then I have had three more children and Jeffrey's mom had one. I was now at three girls and two boys. Jeff's younger brother, Dalton, was so happy to do things with him. Jeff would take him to the county fair or to his baseball games. They had a really special relationship and we were excited about how close they were becoming. My oldest daughter Jennifer and Jeff were extremely close. When we all went through the divorce, the only thing constant in their lives were each other, and Jeff really took care of his little sister.

Jeff wasn't much into sports or being popular (so I thought). He muttered through school as a B or C student. We were in many ways very similar. When he turned 16, I helped him get his first car. I have been brought up to earn what you get in life and if you take care of it, you appreciate it more. I own and manage a car dealership so I made sure he had a nice used car to drive. I insisted that he make payments on it and that he could work at the dealership over the summer to do so. After a while, he traded it for a truck, then we got him another car and after graduation I told him he could upgrade and get something nicer. This boy always worked after school. He would work in a restaurant on Saturdays and at the dealership during the summer. He worked two and sometimes three different jobs. He was motivated by money and cars. His goal in life was to be an electrical inspector. Last winter I made a connection with a friend that owned an electrical contracting company and explained what Jeff was interested in. He knew Jeff from the dealership and gave him a job on the spot, with a promise to get him an interview with the local Electricians Union. Jeff was so excited. For his graduation gift we got him all the necessary hand tools that he needed. He was on cloud nine after graduation. He had a great summer, working at the electrical contractors during the day and part time at a local restaurant in the evening.

On Saturday, before Labor Day, his car broke down. I told him to take it to the dealership and they would give him something to drive for the weekend and on Tuesday we would finally sit down and get him something nice. He had his eye on a Chevy Blazer I had at the lot. On Sunday we went to my parents for a pre-Labor Day outing. My sister and her family were coming from Columbus and aunts, uncles, and cousins. Jeff and Jenny came together as usual and met my wife Becky and kids Dalton 8, Abby 11, and Olivia 3, at my parents. We played horseshoes and cards, and the kids were swimming for a long time. We stayed actually longer than we said we would. We had another picnic at a friend's that night. As we were leaving, Jeff said they were going to hang around a while and then head home. As it turned out, Jenny said when they left, Jeff asked her if she wanted to go ride around and hang out with him and his friends. That was somewhat unusual. He would normally drop her off at their house or she would come with us to our house. He gave me a hug as he always did that day. It seemed no matter how big he got, 6'2"- 260 lbs, or how

old he was, he was never too big to give his Dad a hug. If I had known that was the last time I was to see him again, I would have never let him out of my arms.

The next day was very peaceful. I remember walking in my back yard and feeling so relaxed. The weather was great and it just seemed to be exceptionally quiet. My wife was on the phone for hours that day; her sister was going through marriage problems and she had decided to get a divorce. Like I said, I thought to my self, how relaxing it was and how quiet it seemed to be. Later my wife and I sat by the pool and she told me all about her sister's problems, then we rode to a friend's house for his birthday. We returned home about 8 pm. We got the kids ready for bed, and at 9:00 my daughter Jenny called and was crying. She said Jeffrey was in an accident and that she was not able to get in touch with her Mom. She gave me a number to call back and I was told to go to the hospital, which I did. On the way, I called Jenny and told her to stay off the phone and not to worry that I was sure it was no big deal, and I would call as soon as I heard something.

Well, to make a long story short, after two hours of not knowing why they didn't bring my son to the hospital, a very caring State Police Officer told me what I already knew in my heart, Jeffrey had died on impact. He wasn't wearing his seat belt, he had gone over a hill, hit a tree and was thrown out the driver's window, into a tree.

As I'm sure you are aware, the story goes on and on, but that is pretty much the end.

Jeff has a friend that created a web site in his honor. His friends and family go there occasionally and tell stories of his life. It seems that being popular wasn't what he really wanted to be or what he was looking for in life, but that's what he was. I didn't know that many people cared about him.

This letter and poem was sent later:

I have not found a symbol as of yet, I just haven't been inspired or stumbled over just the right thing. I'm sure when I find a true symbol it will hit me like a ton of bricks. I would like to share with you a poem and a quick story behind the poem.

My Dad's mother had 8 children, the oldest daughter died when she was 17. My Dad was very young at the time but recalls the terrible times his mother went through after Clair's death. During those tough times she expressed herself by writing and wrote this poem. When I was a teenager I stumbled onto a copy of the poem, which for some unknown reason I felt very close to and always felt some odd kind of connection. My Grandmother had 13 grandchildren and I always seemed to be her "favorite", we had a bond that she only had with me. I always felt special to her but never exactly knew why. She passed away in 1994, I always kept that poem in my home and about a year or so ago I passed that down to my middle daughter. She has kept it in her room ever since.

Now I look back and maybe, just maybe this poem was handed down to me for a specific reason, maybe my Grandmother and I had this special bond because we now have experienced the same terrible feelings and grief. Or maybe I am crazy and just looking into this way too much, but regardless I still have the poem and still have a very strong attachment to it.

Last week I finally got the courage to pick out the head stone for Jeffrey's gravesite, I really want it up before spring and never realized how hard that would be to do. But we got

through it and I think it will be real nice. I incorporated my Grandmothers poem on Jeff's stone. I did have to change a couple of words to fit to a boy (she to he).

*To me he'll always be eighteen
The boy we loved so well
But on a bleak September Day
God took him home to dwell*

*To me he'll always be as fair
As he was on that fine day
His sparkling eyes, his innocent smile
Will always be that way*

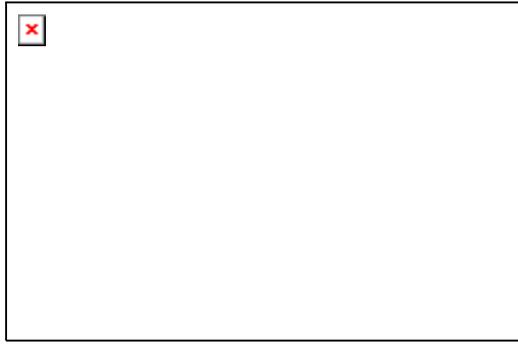
*While alas have older grown
My brow is etched with pain
I wonder if he'll remember me
When we two shall meet again*

*For meet we must, my son and I
In that land beyond the blue
Where love and happiness reign supreme
And all our dreams will come true*

Jeff's symbol is a car.

You can visit his web site at www.jeffmemorial.com

A balanced diet is chocolate in both hands!!



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>