

---

# LAMENTATIONS

Issue 100

middle

April, 2006

---

Who would have believed that from writing notes to bereaved parents almost 15 years ago, I would now be writing the 100<sup>th</sup> newsletter? I guess I am the most surprised of all.

Weeks after Young Jim's death (May 20, 1991), it struck me that I didn't have anyone to talk to who really understood my loss. Here I was in a small town where I knew so many people and probably even more knew me because my husband is the president of the college, but I was still so alone in my grief.

It has always been my mantra that if it is to be, it is up to me, so I began to write other parents when I had heard that they had lost a child. Within the year, I probably had written to 50 or more, so in May, I decided to have a picnic, J. (Joining) I. (In) M. (Memory)'s Picnic, to meet them, because I wanted to hear them talk about their children and I wanted to talk about Jim and my grief with those who would not judge me and what I said.

Twenty-one people came that year and we had lunch and talked about our children and our losses. The parents brought their pictures and we passed them around to share our children with each other. It was so uplifting for all of us to be together.

Luther and Rosemary Smith's two sons, Drew and Jeremiah, were killed in an auto accident, July 23, 1992. After writing them and telling them that I had lost a son, Rosemary called as soon as she received the letter and asked if she and Luther could visit with us. As soon as we saw each other, we knew we would be friends for life. Now, those of you who know Rosemary know that she is a woman of action. She immediately started reading the obituary pages and when she saw that a child, teenager, or young person had died, she would contact the parents and then she would send me the names to contact them also.

After several months, realizing that the letters I was receiving from these parents were filled with their children's lives, I wanted everyone else to know these precious children, so I started a "newsletter" like people do at Christmas. And as they say, the rest is history. LAMENTATIONS rose from the ashes of my heart, like the Phoenix rose from ashes.

The next picnic several more parents came. Each year as more parents came, we added a candlelight remembrance service, balloon liftoff, and earth ceremony.

In 1994 we dedicated the first remembrance of our children, the Dome at the Cumberland Inn. It was dedicated in memory of Drew and Jeremiah Smith. During the first years of the picnic, we had wonderful speakers such as Elaine Stillwell, Kay Bevington, Charlie Walton, Rosemary Smith, Becky Greer, Maria Housden, and Ann Kechter. Cindy Bullens has played and sung at the past 5 conferences and Kathy Jo Gutsell has played the harp at several of the picnics. Dave Robins wrote and performed "J.I.M.'s Picnic Song" several times. Judy Rose wrote and performed her song "Day by Day" at the last two conferences.

At the 2000 picnic, we had a book signing for Rosemary Smith's book Children of the Dome. It was such a thrilling occasion. We all celebrated with her. The title for her book came to her in a dream. Her book is now available in Spanish also. Rosemary started sending grief packets to bereaved parents soon after her sons were killed. She continues to send them to this day. These grief packets have helped all of us in dealing with our grief. If you know of anyone who needs a packet, or if you would like to purchase her book in English or Spanish, you can email her at [childrenofdome@cs.com](mailto:childrenofdome@cs.com)

Wayne Taylor, who painted the Dome at the Cumberland Inn and The Fine Arts Building Dome, spoke about the pictures he had painted for the first of each of the chapters of Rosemary's book and the inspiration he received from our children in depicting the symbols in both domes.

The Dome at the Grace Crum Rollins Fine Arts Center was dedicated at the picnic, 2001. This dome contains all the symbols of the children who are in Rosemary's book, as well as many others.

The picnic changed from J.I.M.'s Picnic to J.I.M.'s Conference in 2002 and went to a two-day conference that included many workshops. Thanks to Glen and Judy Cummins, J.I.M.'s Commons was dedicated in memory of their son, Scott, and two other young men who were also killed. The Commons is a park with 6 benches and hundreds of bricks with our children's names, symbols, birth and death dates on them. At this conference and each conference after this one, flags were placed at each child's brick and the parents would take them home after the conference.

The Christmas Box Angel was dedicated at the 2004 J.I.M.'s Conference. The Smiths gave the Christmas Box Angel and the Wilkinsons gave the pedestal she stands on. Richard Paul Evans, author of The Christmas Box, and producer of the Christmas Box Angel sent 200 signed copies of his book for the parents to have.

We ended the conference, as we know it, last year. We dedicated the Window of Hope. Bill Rogers, the designer and maker of the Window of Hope Stain Glass Window blessed us with the meaning of each window. We also dedicated the Tree of Life. I hope you will visit all of these dedications that are found on the website. Look at the pictures and read about the dedications. Your heart will be warmed by knowing that at the University of the Cumberlands (formally Cumberland College) in Williamsburg, Kentucky, our children will always be remembered.

As I said, the conference, as we know it, has ended, but we will be together again, I promise. Rosemary Smith has just about finished the documentary and hopes to be able to premier it this fall. Needless to say, we will be the first group to see it. We fellow travelers have been through a lot together and we will continue to be together. I'm hoping to have a reunion picnic in the very near future. It will be a time we can get together once again and celebrate our children.

Please continue to share your children, your thoughts, your concerns, and your hopes. I selfishly ask you to remember Young Jim and please look at his page on the website every so often so you can see his picture. As I write notes on your child's angel dates, I always look at their picture (if you have given me one) and smile, because I know they are loved by so many people. And by sharing them, their symbols and their story, they will be remembered by all who read about them. If you haven't written about your child yet, I encourage you to do so.

## Grief Grafts

**Tim & Cindi Wafstet's daughter, Courtney Marie (12-13-84),  
died in a tragic accident at home, 9-14-00.**

*We set up a college scholarship fund in Courtney's name. To date, we have awarded 12 seniors at Kamiak High school in Mukilteo with money to attend the college of their choice from the Courtney Marie Wafstet Scholarship Fund.*

*In August of 2001, we celebrated "The Life of an Angel," bringing family and friends together in a memorial for Courtney. We had a three day event starting with dinner at the 3 Crabs Restaurant, which is near the cemetery where Courtney is buried. After dinner, many of us gathered at the beach for a small candle lighting circle. On Saturday, many more joined us for a picnic at Diamond Point beach. Sunday, we had a special 'farewell' service at the cemetery, with prayers, songs and a release of purple balloons.*

*September 14, 2001, one year later. We were suffering from double grief... the anniversary of Courtney's death, and the attack on America by terrorists just three days before. We chose to have a quiet time of memories and reflection on Courtney's Heaven Date. One Year Later, back home in Lynnwood, our neighbors recognized all of the people who lost their lives on 9/11 with a "Wall of Tears;" of quiet candlelight. A candle was lit in Courtney's memory as well. Wall of Tears.*

*We know that Courtney's spirit is with us. I feel her presence constantly. But one thing happened that really has convinced me. One of Courtney's friends, Laura, brought a bouquet of beautiful lavender roses, closed tightly in little buds. Later that night, Alexis and I were talking when suddenly we stopped and looked over at the roses. Right before our eyes, one of the buds opened to a full rose. We were stunned! I suddenly felt calm and warm, like Courtney's arms were wrapped around me.*

*That's one of the signs she sends me and it was the first one after she died. She also sends us a scent, that both my husband and I can smell... it's hard to describe so we just call it 'purple'...*

*She sends us all kinds of signs, but the most common one is song lyrics, or dialogue in a movie or TV show.*

*In the hospital during surgery, she told me to sing with the angels, and then teased me because I was singing off key... then she said, "Mom you can't sing right with that thing (breathing tube) in your mouth" and then laughed and laughed...*

*Cindi*

**Courtney's symbols are a lavender rose and the color, "purple."**

**Rick & Sheila Allen's daughter, Timi (6-17-83), died from cancer, 3-9-93, their son, Whitney (10-1-86) died in an auto accident, 3-4-05.**

The family sent this article to their local newspaper:

***Jeana Timithea Alison Allen***  
***6-17-83 – 3-9-93***

***Phillip Whitney Christian Allen***  
***10-1-86 – 3-4-05***

***For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. Psalm 91:11***

*When Timi and Whitney were born, we never dreamed what the future held. It never entered our minds that Timi wouldn't live to be a teenager nor Whitney to be out of his teens. They were both such beautiful babies, both had angelic faces framed with long black hair. Timi was born on Friday, June 17, 1983, at 3:26 am and Whitney was born on Wednesday, October 1, 1986, at 8:18 am, I remember it was raining both days.*

*Timi was so thrilled to have a baby brother; she wanted to help do everything. Life was good until our world was turned upside down when Timi was diagnosed with cancer. We didn't ask why this happened to us, we just took one day at a time and with God-given strength and courage we made it through 18 chemotherapies, 31 radiation treatments and everything else that goes with this dreaded disease. The hospital became our home away from home. Timi took everything in stride; that's the thing about kids, they deal with the situation at hand and don't worry about the next one. Whitney was so good during this time; he was 3 when Timi started treatments. I don't remember him ever complaining about staying away from*

us so much. Of course, he enjoyed staying with mamaw and papaw or Uncle Larry and Aunt Joyce, I don't know what we would have done without them.

Whitney tried to help when he could, when I changed the dressing on her Hickman, Whitney would sit on the bed and hold her hand, he was 4 at the time. When Timi felt like it, she and Whitney would play school. She taught him to count to 100 and the alphabet. He always wanted to sit in on Timi's lessons when her homebound teacher, Mrs. Anna Gail Gevedon, would come. Mrs. Gevedon never seemed to mind the extra pupil, she is a wonderful lady.

After Timi finished her treatments in June 1991, the Dream Factory sent all of us to Disney World; cousin Nina got to go too. What a time we had, we felt free at last. While we were there, Newsweek Magazine was doing a story on Disney's 20 year anniversary and they picked Timi and another cancer survivor to be in their magazine. They did a huge article and had several pictures of the girls in their article. We couldn't believe it our little girl in Newsweek. In December of the same year, Timi and two other cancer survivors were grand marshals in the Christmas parade at town. When we returned home, Timi said, "It's a good thing I had cancer or I wouldn't have gotten to do all this." Children always see the good in everything.

Things were back to normal again until Timi's cancer came back in January 1993. Timi, Rick, and I were sitting in the van after we left the doctor's office crying and Timi said "God wouldn't put this on us if we couldn't handle it." Out of the mouths of babes. She lived two months. Timi went to heaven March 9, 1993, three years from the day of her first chemotherapy. Life as we knew it was changed forever.

Whitney had to grow up fast during Timi's illness. He was a good child, always willing to help. I don't remember him ever refusing to do anything we asked him to do. We never had to tell him to do his homework or study for tests and he always had good grades. He loved basketball so much he started playing Junior Pro in 1993; he was 7. He played 2 years then broke his arm and had to have surgery. He had to miss that year of ball, but he didn't complain, he didn't even cry when he broke his arm. The next few years he played Junior Pro and 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade at the middle school, and the last 3 years of high school. His senior year the team went to state, everyone was so proud.

Thanks to Parker Banks, Whitney got to go on the vacation of a lifetime the summer between his junior and senior year of high school. They flew from Cincinnati to Los Angeles and from there to Honolulu, then to Sidney Australia, New Zealand and Nadi Fiji. They were gone for 2 weeks. For us

*it seemed like forever even though he called every night. That was Whitney not wanting us to worry.*

*I know Whitney wasn't perfect, but to us he was close, always thinking of others before himself, very dedicated to his friends and family. He loved to get together with his friends, I think every weekend there were always an extra boy, or 2, or 3 at our house and Rick and I loved having them over. Then he found sweet little Ashley. We had stopped at the famous Wendy's at Grayson we always stopped at after games in that direction and I remember watching her and thinking I wish Whitney would start dating her and of course I had to tell him so when we got home. The next thing I knew they were dating. Thank you Ashley for making him so happy. You'll always be part of our family, we love you. I wish he could be here for you now. Thanks for Charlie we love him so much; the little critter is part of the family now.*

*Whitney graduated in 2004 with a 4-year presidential scholarship to Morehead State. He started college in August. He would get frustrated when he didn't find a job as soon as he thought he should. I told him not to worry when God wanted him to find a job he would, and he started work at Krogers in November. He kept good grades, found time for his girlfriend Ashley, and worked. He called us every night to tell us he loved us, how we miss those calls.*

*The last ballgame Whitney played in was to help raise money for a friend who was going through a hard time, he loved helping people.*

*Whitney was our life after Timi went to heaven he was such a joy, the best son any parent could ask for. We miss him more than words could ever say. At times we still catch ourselves checking the caller ID to see if he is calling or listening for him to come up the drive in that black Monte he loved, then we see that Monte sitting lonely in our driveway and we know it's true he's not coming back. Our hearts have been broken beyond repair and we still ask why both our angels. We will probably never know why in this lifetime, but when we all get together in heaven it won't matter.*

***For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Roman 8:18.***

*Ralphie, you'll never know how much you have helped us, thank you and we love you very much. Kevin and Zach, thank you guys too, we love ya. Doug and Lisa, words can't express how you have helped us. Wayne and Della you've been wonderful. You will all be rewarded. Thanks to everyone that has helped in any way since that never-ending night of March 4, 2005, especially all the prayers.*

*No farewell words were spoken  
No time to say goodbye  
You were gone before we knew it  
And only God knows why*

*Rick and Shelia Allen*

[manohova@hotmail.com](mailto:manohova@hotmail.com)

**Dale & Betty Mastley's son, Chris (9-2-65), died in an auto accident, 12-5-94.**

The Mastleys' surviving son, Scott, wrote, Surviving A Sibling, which is an excellent book. If you are interested in getting it for your surviving children, you can contact Scott at [scottmm@mindspring.com](mailto:scottmm@mindspring.com)

Betty wrote about this past month's newsletter:

*Dear Dinah,*

*The Irish blessing was wonderful. I printed it out to have it. Your ideas are always good in the newsletter. Sometimes I forget that other people are suffering as well. I get very wrapped up in my grief feeling sorry for myself, so it is good to be reminded that there are so many others out there. By sharing your ideas and feelings, it does help other people so much. Thank you.*

*Love,*

*Betty*

*Yes, I would like to be put in the directory. Our dear son, Chris, died in a car accident. No one else was injured. I guess a good symbol for Chris would be the telephone. He was so good about calling and always keeping up with everybody. Dale and I and his brother Scott miss him terribly.*

**Chris' symbol is a telephone.**

**Jean Powell's son, Ian (5-27-98), died in an auto accident,  
10-1-02.**

Jean is looking for new ways of remembering Ian. She would like to hear from you about ideas:

*I guess I can say we are at a different place in our grief that only other's in our situation would understand. I am sure a lot of people think we are "over" Ian - like you could ever do that, they see us smile and laugh more but our hearts still ache. We still wonder, think, question why. Ian is still a major part of our lives, he always will be.*

*I read your newsletters. I think it is wonderful all the time and effort that you and everyone put into it to honor our children. I need and want to do something more for Ian. Our local library created a corner for Ian and we have over 500 books donated in his name there, also our new playground was named in his honor. We created a flower bed and a beautiful stone plaque around the sign. But I want more. Please let me know how I can go about creating, putting, sharing Ian on your web site. I feel I have stepped away from my grief for some time, and need and want to get back at it, if that makes sense.*

*Thank you for everything,*

*Jean - forever Ian's mom*

*Ian Patrick Powell*

*[HPJP123@aol.com](mailto:HPJP123@aol.com)*

Another note from Jean to explain Ian's symbols:

Dinah,

*Ian has 2 symbols. One is a butterfly. When I buy him something for the cemetery, I try to find something with a butterfly on it. The reason why the butterfly is his symbol is because that was the last thing he made in preschool. He was just learning to do his "B"'s. He painted it red and yellow. I have it on the refrigerator. The 2nd symbol is an eagle. At his service an eagle flew right over and circled and circled. So we have both. When we moved into our new house, in all the mess on the floor from the workers-dirt, papers, nails, pieces of wood shavings, etc..., Shawn and I looked down and saw a small piece of wood in the shape of an eagle's head.*

*It is very distinguished. There is a beak and what looks like an eye on it as well, even jagged edges to look like feathers. Shawn and I just looked at it in amazement. I have it on my window sill in the kitchen.*

**Ian's symbols are a butterfly and an eagle.**

**Bill & Teal Snapp's son, Billy (6-23-81), died from accidental carbon monoxide poisoning, 2-25-96.**

Bill and Teal observed the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Billy's death by sending out a CD with pictures of Billy, accompanied by this letter:

*Dear Friends and Family,  
February 25, 2006*

*We are both happy and well. On the one hand, that hardly seems to be a significant accomplishment. On the other, it seems like a miracle; a miracle that has been achieved as a result of hard work and support from friends and family. Why has such a simple task been hard? Because Billy, our only child, died ten years ago. Ten years is a long, long time but, in many respects, 2/25/96 was only yesterday . . .*

*When Billy first died, we thought about him and grieved his death constantly. As with most parents of children who die, we were afraid that his memory would be lost – that we and others would forget he ever lived. Over time, we became aware that we could carry the memory of Billy with us without grieving for him every minute of every day. We continue to think of him often in parent meetings, at home, in the grocery store, at the bowling alley. Thinking of Billy can be funny or sad, but it always feels good because it assures us that we are fulfilling our last parental duty/honor: not forgetting him.*

*That brings us to this letter. Over the last decade, friends, family and others have sometimes asked, "What can we do?" Well. If you would like to do so, there is something you can do. You can actively think about Billy for a few minutes, even though he has been dead for ten years. And*

*then, whenever we happen to see you next, you could let us know that you took a little time from your busy schedule to think about Billy.*

*If you choose to think about Billy, we have enclosed some stuff that may help. Perhaps you knew Billy for his entire lifetime of 14 years, 8 months and two days. Perhaps you knew him for only a few years, or for only a single basketball season or school year. Perhaps you never met Billy at all and know him only from our stories and conversations. Whatever your relationship with Billy or with us, we hope you enjoy some or all of the following enclosures:*

- An article recently written for "Alive Alone," a newsletter for those parents who have lost only or all children. "Alive Alone" is one of several groups we've been affiliated with over these years, first because we needed the support and understanding these groups provide. We've continued to attend meetings, write articles and participate in conferences in order to provide hope and comfort to others who are struggling to survive the loss of a child.*

- A parable about immortality. It's a nice thought that, perhaps, Billy may have reached another shore.*

- "A Child Loaned," a poem that has meant a lot to us since even before Billy's funeral, where it was read by a high school classmate of Bill's. Its words have provided some semblance of meaning for Billy's life and death.*

- A butterfly because it is a symbol of hope. A butterfly lights beside us for a brief moment, but then it flies on again. Although we wish it could have stayed, we are thankful to have seen it at all.*

- A DVD of photographs and music. We hope you enjoy seeing Billy doing nearly everything he was able to do in his short, but very full life. This DVD represents Billy's "dash." If you look at Billy's headstone, you see his name followed by: "June 23, 1981 – February 25, 1996." You notice the dates, and on neither date did the world stand still nor did the stars fall from the sky. These dates aren't really important in the grand scheme of things.*

*The dash between those dates is what's important. The dash represents how Billy's life was spent. Billy was not quick to anger, and always seemed to understand the way others felt. He showed appreciation for every gift he received, and loved the people in his life. He treated others with respect and wore his gorgeous smile most of the time. We're proud of the way Billy spent his dash.*

*All our love,*

*Bill and Teal*

**WILLIAM TEAL SNAPP  
“BILLY”**

**[ Article written for “Alive Alone,” the newsletter for parents who have lost only or all children. Dec. 2005 ]**

*Billy is buried in a small, town cemetery in Ridge Farm, IL, next to his grandmother, his aunt, uncles and his cousin Teal. He should not be there. He should be alive. The front of his headstone informs all who pass by that he died on February 25, 1996, a mere 14 years, 8 months and 2 days after his birth. The back of his headstone depicts a kitten enjoying a sunset beneath a simple message, “Cherished child and friend who loved and shared beautiful sunsets.” That was our Billy.*

*Billy was born in Oak Park, IL, on June 23, 1981. His life revolved around activities common to most children: soccer, basketball, hockey, roller-blading, bike-riding, movies, Nintendo, swimming, Scouting, bowling and chocolate chip cookies. He enjoyed playing with his cats, playing board games and vacationing with us. We took some memorable trips when he was with us. His best friend was Phai, who had moved to Illinois from Thailand. Billy went with Phai, when he was 11 and Phai was 14, traveling alone, to spend 5 weeks in Thailand. Living without Billy for five weeks was excruciating! Now, we’d give anything to see him come home with a suitcase of dirty laundry.*

*He liked the color red; Christmas and Birthdays; casual, loose clothing; clever jokes and puns; dragons on his t-shirts; Nike tennis shoes; Dawson’s Creek; fireworks; and music of every sort. He hated mowing the lawn; his thick, curly hair; his retainer after braces; Cotillion classes; finding out that a song he liked was a re-make of a 60's recording and his parents knew all the words; and having his picture taken.*

*When Billy was 11, we moved to Georgia. In Georgia, Billy remained gentle, kind and artistic. Although he had a college-level vocabulary, he expressed himself with a few, well-chosen words. He and I had our memorable conversations in the car on the way to the bowling alley or to basketball games.*

*Billy was a handsome young man, over 6'2" tall, wore 13 ½ shoes, and was openly pursued by girls he knew. His main focus was on a young lady who had recently told him that she was not ready to date. He had yet to experience his first kiss.*

*Billy's last day was a typical Saturday for our family. In the morning, he bowled over his average, helping his team move up in the standings. In the afternoon, his basketball team pulled off an upset victory, and Billy was excited about playing in the Championship game on Tuesday. Later, Billy and a friend rode their bicycles in the woods near our home and set off half a bag of fireworks, saving half for the next day. In the early evening, Billy played basketball in our driveway with his dad and some neighborhood friends, and made plans to play again the next day.*

*Billy then asked both of us to share a beautiful sunset with him – he always noticed sunsets in Georgia! After a few quiet moments together, Billy got us both “up” for a movie, so off we went! We saw “Happy Gilmore” and Billy said afterwards, “Happy was crappy.” After coming home, we started to watch a recorded episode of “E.R.” but Billy said he was tired and asked us to save it for the next day. He said his good-nights and went off to bed at 10:30 p.m.*

*Some time later, Billy must've gone to the car to listen to a CD. He had head-phones with him and a flashlight, so he could find his way back into the house. Unfortunately, he fell asleep and I found him the next morning . . .*

*After the loss of a child, parents ask, “Why?” I'll never know what he was thinking when he turned the car on in the garage that night. I do know that he didn't understand the dangers of carbon monoxide, because of an earlier conversation with his dad, and I do know that he was looking forward to the next days, weeks, months and years of his life.*

*As all of you Alive Alone Parents know, these last 10 years have not been a walk in the park. Here's what helped us survive: immediate involvement in parent support groups, first and always as the Needy but, later, as Helper. Reading all the grief books. Attending conferences, learning in the workshops, and meeting all of you. You've shared your children with us, as we've shared Billy with you. Continuing to this day, good and compassionate friends have sent cards, flowers and e-mails or have called us on special days.*

*We remember every kindness. Whatever your part has been, in consoling our hearts, we thank you.*

*Teal and Bill Snapp*

*Just a final word -- Ten years has been a long journey. No one thing or one person has accounted for our survival to this point. But your generous spirit and kindness have certainly provided a significant*

*contribution to that survival. Thank you for being who you are and doing what you do.*

*The references to Billy's "Dash" came from JIM's Picnic. . .*

*Bill Snapp*

**Billy's symbol is a bowling pin.**

**Alice Isabell's son, Randy Hecox (1-7-69), completed suicide,  
7-23-99.**

Ali has remembered Randy in a very special way:

*Dinah,*



*Add my child to the list. His symbol is the eagle and I now have a tattoo on my arm with an eagle and his name and dates under it. I would like to meet other moms who lost a child to suicide. I hope to start a small group up here soon, with help from my hospital.*

*Ali*

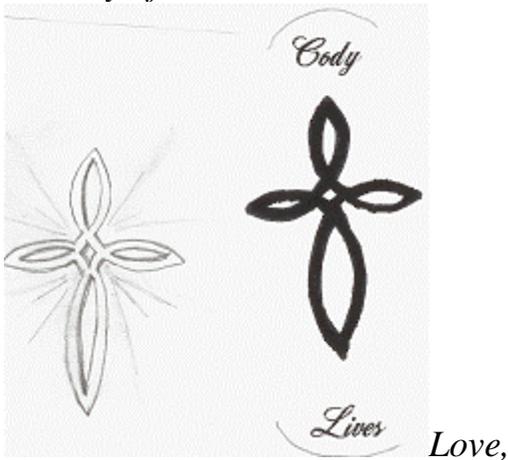
This quilt was made from Randy's jeans.

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

**Mark & Lin Simmon's son, Cody Speer (12-1-91), died  
unexpectedly after a Tonsillectomy, 4-2-05.**

*Lin wrote:*

*I have thought a lot about what his symbol would be. Gosh, he was the kid who could have a million of them. He had Jesus in his heart so first it would be a very special cross that I designed. I call it the Eternal Cross because, like a ring, it goes on forever. Then I would have to say “OU” for Oklahoma University. The “OU”, my husband painted on his wall in his room, 2 weeks before he died...He loved this so much because he and his Granddad loved “OU.” The cross is cool, because, even though I am a very conservative person, I got a tattoo of this cross on my ankle on Cody’s birthday this past December 1<sup>st</sup>. I am nothing like that, but I love that his name is on my body...The tattoo says “Cody Lives.” And he does, so I can tell others that one sweet day I will see him again! Plus, he would think I was the coolest Mom in the world. The fact that I got a special tattoo in memory of him!*



*Lin*

**Cody’s symbols are  
a cross and “OU.”**

**Tim & Jeanne Brown’s daughter, Allie (8-30-99), died from  
Leukemia, 9-19-01.**

Jeanne shares how she selected Allie’s symbol:

*It is funny, but when I am down and thinking of her, I find a dime! I thought it was a coincidence that is until I found one cleaning a window, the kind you have to open from the bottom, and on the edge of it was a dime! Now who in their right mind would leave a dime there? So, then on I've been saying hello to her whenever I see one. I'll try to send pictures soon!  
Love, Jeanne*

**Allie's symbol is a dime.**

**Louise Wallace's daughter, Kimberly (3-24-83), died in an auto accident, 11-26-02.**

Louise sent a picture of Kim and in her letter she said:

*Here is the picture of Kim I promised you. This was taken when she was 18. She was a handful at times, but in hindsight, she was a good kid and was actually becoming a beautiful young adult.*

*I miss her and think of her every day, especially now. I know she is with her Dad at last. (Keith, her husband, died 1-12-06)*

*Keep up your good work. Sometimes, when I'm down, I'll pull up your newsletters, read it, and have a good cry. Then I feel better. Sometimes a good cry puts a new perspective on things.*

*Your fellow traveler,*

*Lou*

**Kim's symbols are Scooby-Doo, sunflowers and butterflies.**

**Ron & Deb Baker's daughter, Tammy Smith (3-29-81), was murdered, 1-30-03.**

Deb sent this invitation to celebrate Tammy's birthday, what a good idea:



March 29, 1981 ~ January 30, 2003

### ***A Birthday Message for a Special Angel!***

Birthdays meant so much to you and though you are not here with us,  
We know you too will be celebrating, but in a heavenly way.

We are sending you 25 green balloons with our birthday message,  
To the kids it means so much, their balloon floating upwards to you in  
Heaven.

Look for the many candles that we light, left to glow with our love all night.  
Afterwards, we will order some of your favorite foods... pizza and wings,  
The kids especially like when the guys play pool and darts with them...  
It helps us.... to be together on your special day!

# Happy 25<sup>th</sup> Birthday in Heaven Tammy

***Forever Loved ~ Forever Remembered***

*Mom & Ron, Dylan, Shanae, Devin, Darin & family, your brothers  
Mike, Rob, Steve, Kevin, your nieces, nephews and your friends....*

~~~~~  
~~~~~  
*We will be meeting at the cemetery at 6:00 p.m. for the balloon release and to light candles. Afterwards we are going to JC's for:*

Pizza, Chicken Wings, Taco Salad

German Chocolate Cake  
(Tammy's favorite)

Coffee, Hawaiian Punch, and Pop

**Tammy's symbols are a dolphin and a rose.**

**Frank & Melba Thomas' son, Bill (2-15-61), died in an auto accident, 2-24-90.**

Melba shares the joys of her grandchildren:

*Dear Dinah, thank you so much for the lovely card you sent. I still cry every time I try to talk about my son Bill. His death Feb. 24, 1990, left a hole so wide it seems to never go away. We were luckier than most because Bill left us two beautiful grandchildren. Julie was 4 1/2 and Bobby had just turned 3 six days before our son died in a car accident.*

*They are now both in college on scholarships. Soccer for Julie, Cal State University Bakersfield and Football for Bobby at the University of South Dakota. Julie is a Junior and will turn 21 in Sept. Bobby was 19 in Feb. and is a Freshman. They both are unique in their own way, but picked up their Dad's love of sports and smarts. They are both good at everything they try, which I'm sure makes their Dad, who watches over them, very proud. Their Mom, Evie, and step dad, Stephen, have done an excellent job of raising them to be caring and loving, and with a profound love of God. They are truly blessed to have a little brother Jesse, who we love so dearly, as they do also. They have a very close bond with family and church. You had asked for a picture of Bill and I will get one in the mail to you soon. Thanks again, Feb. is always a hard month to get through. Your card was very thoughtful and made me feel so much better. None of us will forget it. God Bless and the website for your son was so heartwarming. I'm sorry for your loss also.*

*It is so hard to lose them, but so wonderful knowing we will see them  
again someday.*

*Take care,  
Melba*

This poem was written by Ginny, an email friend of Melba's:

***My Son My Life***

*I knew the day that you were born  
God sent me a special son  
You gave me so much pleasure  
So good and so much fun.*

*You made me so proud as a Mother  
The love you gave to me  
I'll keep precious memories forever  
Your face I will always see.*

*You left this earth far too young  
Left your family who loves you so  
But your memory will live forever  
No matter where we go.  
God had another plan for you  
After all he gave you to me  
He needed another Angel  
And with him he wanted you to be.*

*You are always with me  
Deep in my heart you will stay  
Wait for me my precious son  
I'll be with you someday.*

*In memory of Bill Thomas  
Ginny  
Journey Of Love  
2004*

Another email friend of hers, Norma, wrote this poem to be from Bill  
to Melba,

*Mom I ask you not to grieve just shed your tears to ease your heart.  
We knew one of us would leave that one day we would part.  
Remember that I loved you, God numbers all our days.  
So mom, please try to accept His will and awesome ways.  
Talk to me I will hear though I'm no longer there with you.  
Yes mom I'm still near, love of child and mother is forever true.  
Someday again we'll meet though it may be awhile,  
I'll save you a special seat and on your face you'll wear a smile.  
I won't forget what we shared, it's embedded in my heart,  
God knew how much we cared at the time we had to part.  
Time will ease your pain just rest in God's great love,  
We will be together once again in heaven here above.  
'Till that time I'll wait in my new home up here,  
Where there is an open gate to let us once again be near.  
Yes mom I'll always love you 'till your time comes to be with me,  
Look up at the sky of blue 'cause waiting there is where I'll be.*

*Written by Norma Marek 11-2-03  
Dedicated to Melba my friend...God Bless*

This was written by Bill's best friend's wife, Sonya:

*WE MISS YOU, MY FRIEND  
WILLIAM EDWARD THOMAS  
2/15/61-2/24-90*

*WE MISS YOU, MY FRIEND.*

*WE ARE SADDENED BY THE LOSS OF THE SPECIAL FRIENDSHIP WE'VE SHARED THROUGH THE YEARS. WE'VE BEEN THROUGH SO MUCH TOGETHER, THAT WE CAN'T IMAGINE NOT HAVING YOU HERE TO SHARE OUR JOYS AND HELP CARRY OUR SORROWS.*

*YET WITHIN OUR SOULS, WE FEEL PEACE AND ACCEPTANCE. FOR WE KNOW THAT YOU WERE TAKEN FOR A REASON. YOUR FAITH MUST HAVE BEEN SO GREAT, THAT THERE WEREN'T BLESSINGS BOUNTIFUL ENOUGH ON THIS EARTH TO REWARD YOU. WE KNOW YOU FEEL OUR GRIEF AND CAN SENSE OUR FRUSTRATION.*

*WE JUST NEEDED TO SAY I LOVE YOU. WE WANTED TO TALK FOR AWHILE. WE WANTED TO HUG YOU AND NEVER LET YOU GO. YET YOU'LL ALWAYS BE HERE ALIVE AND WELL IN OUR HEARTS.*

*WE'LL CARRY YOU WITH US THROUGH ALL OUR FAVORITE TIMES, AND LOOK BACK AND REFLECT ON ALL THE GREAT TIMES WE'VE HAD TOGETHER.*

*BUT HERE IN OUR HEARTS,*

*WE MISS YOU, MY FRIEND.*

*YOUR FRIENDS: JAIME, BOB, STEVE, AND MIKE*

*WRITTEN BY: SONYA WOODSIDE*

PALLBEARERS:  
MIKE TOLLIVER,  
JAIME ROSALES,  
MIKE THOMAS,  
RICK THOMAS,  
STEVE DEROSS,

STEVE WOODSIDE,  
BOB WAYLAND,  
MARK SOGER (SOG DOG)  
CHUCK THOMAS,  
PHILLIP CHAVEZ

WE HAD PEOPLE WHO WANTED TO CARRY BILL TO HIS RESTING SPOT. SO WE ENDED UP HAVING HIS BEST AND CLOSEST FRIENDS, AND THEN FAMILY MEMBERS.

This poem was written by Norma to be from Melba to Bill:

### ***Tenderly I Hold Your Memory***

*The tiny fingers wrapped 'round one of mine, how fragile they seemed to me.  
The pink of a blushing rose they were, I thanked God for thee.  
No more proud of anything had I ever been,  
Than when I realized what my womb had grown within.  
In awe I watched you sleep the sleep of angels, in your little bed,  
Too young to have any dreams in your perfect newborn head.  
A smile touched your lips and kiss them I could not resist,  
Sitting by you as you slept and in my mind, making a list,  
Of all the things I would do for you in the years I thought we had.  
Not knowing your life would be so short, and I would be so sad.  
I knew you were just a loan from God, as are we all,  
What I didn't know was that you, He would so soon call.  
To join Him in heaven and become an angel in paradise,  
But when He called He had a plan, though tears flow from my eyes  
No other child sent in your place could help me with the pain,  
To this day my son when I think of you, tears flow like rain.  
Yes my other children helped me deal with losing you,  
But a mom never forgets her other child, and I still hurt it's true.  
But now I know I will see you again some day where Jesus lives,  
And for every loss we have a new blessing our Lord gives.  
Through the years I held and loved you, watched you grow to be a man,  
All the things you did along the way, even things I didn't understand,  
Made me proud to be your mom, I felt blessed every day.  
As I still do when I remember all you did along the way.  
How I miss the words "I love you mom" coming from your lips,  
The touch of your face as I caressed it with my loving fingertips.  
I look at your picture and kiss the glass covered frame,*

*While tears flow like a river as I softly call your name,  
A special place will always be saved in my heart for you,  
To be used by your friends and family whose love for you was true.  
When I look into your children's faces, a part of you still lives,  
They are gifts God provided because when He takes He also gives.  
In time I'll learn to live with losing you, the pain with age will ease,  
But never fully go away, I ask God to help me please!  
Someday we will meet again in a world that has no pain,  
But it's so hard to wait my child until I see you once again.  
I treasure every moment you were on loan to me,  
Now you're back in heaven where God wants you to be.  
He also leaves us something else; it's our gift of memory,  
And you are held within my heart, oh, so tenderly.*

Norma Marek 10-30-03----Dedicated to Bill, Melba's son who died so tragically in an accident at age 29. You will be missed by family and friends. May God bless.

This is a paper Chuck wrote when he was in college. He wrote about his brother, Bill. Bill and his wife were reconciling. He was coming to town so he could pick them up and take them home that morning, when his accident happened:

*MY LAST GOODBYE BEGAN ON A SUNDAY MORNING FEBRUARY 16, 1990. THE AIR WAS CRISP AND FRESH FROM A RECENT WINTER RAIN, AND IF YOU HAVE EVER EXPERIENCED RAINS IN THE DESERT, THE SMELLS THAT THEY PRODUCE REALLY SEEM TO HEIGHTEN YOUR SENSES. I FELT REFRESHED AND ALIVE AND WAS READY FOR WHATEVER GOD HAD PLANNED FOR ME THAT WONDERFUL MORNING. MY FAMILY AND I ARRIVED AT CHURCH AND PROCEEDED WITH OUR SUNDAY MORNING RITUALS OF GREETING FRIENDS AND ENJOYING FRESH COFFEE AND MUFFINS, WHICH WAS PART OF THE CAFE ATMOSPHERE THAT WAS THE STYLE OF THE DESERT VINEYARD CHURCH. AS THE MORNING SERVICE BEGAN WITH WORSHIP SONGS AND DANCERS IN THE AISLES, I NOTICED MY OLDER BROTHER SITTING A FEW ROWS OVER WITH AN OLD CLASSMATE WHO ATTENDED OUR CHURCH.*

*I KNEW BILL HAD BEEN GOING THROUGH SOME ROUGH TIMES, AS MY MOTHER WAS THE GOSSIP COLUMNIST FOR THE THOMAS FAMILY; ANY INFORMATION YOU NEEDED TO KNOW JUST CALL "MAMA T" AND SHE WILL TELL ALL. HIS WIFE OF 6 YEARS HAD LEFT HIM AND HE HAD LOST HIS JOB RIGHT BEFORE THE SPLIT UP.*

*UNFORTUNATELY, LIFE WAS DEALING MY BROTHER A VERY HARD HAND OF REALITY. AS I SAT THERE WATCHING MY BROTHER, AND LISTENING TO THE WORSHIP SONGS PLAY IN MY EARS, I FELT THIS OVERWHELMING SENSE THAT I NEEDED TO DO OR SAY SOMETHING. I THOUGHT, AS I SAT THERE STARING, FEELING SADNESS AND IN DESPAIR.. THAT'S WHEN I HEARD THIS LITTLE VOICE DEEP DOWN WITHIN MY SPIRIT, OR CONSCIENCE, TELLING ME TO GO OVER TO HIM AND LET HIM KNOW THAT I*

LOVED HIM, THEN KISS HIM ON THE CHEEK. AS I PONDERED THOSE WORDS, I THOUGHT TO MYSELF "WHAT IF HE THINKS I AM STRANGE OR THAT I HAVE GONE OVER THE EDGE?" WE WERE TAUGHT AS YOUNG CHILDREN THAT MEN DO NOT KISS MEN IN PUBLIC. I SAT THERE STRUGGLING WITH MY PRIDE ON WHAT I SHOULD DO. I DID NOT QUITE UNDERSTAND THIS STRANGE FEELING THAT I WAS CONFRONTED WITH.

AS I SAT THERE STRUGGLING WITH MYSELF, MY WIFE KELLY NUDGED ME AND SPOKE IN MY EAR SAYING "I THINK YOU NEED TO GO OVER THERE AND TELL YOUR BROTHER THAT YOU LOVE HIM," "WOW," I THOUGHT AS I LOOKED AT THE SINCERE EXPRESSION ON HER FACE. IT WAS ALMOST AS IF GOD WAS LOOKING AT ME THROUGH HER EYES. IT SENT CHILLS DOWN MY SPINE AS I STARED BACK AT HER WITH, MOST LIKELY A STUPID EXPRESSION ON MY FACE, OR MAYBE LIKE I HAD JUST SEEN A GHOST.

AT THAT MOMENT I STOOD UP HESITANTLY, AND APPROACHED BILL IN A RELUCTANT MANNER. THE WORSHIP MUSIC WAS STILL PLAYING, AND THE DANCERS WERE STILL DANCING, BUT IN MY MIND ALL I COULD SEE WAS MY BROTHER. HE STOOD UP AND EXTENDED HIS HAND TO ME AS WE BOTH STARED INTO EACH OTHERS EYES. AT THAT MOMENT I FELT A STRANGE STRENGTH WITHIN ME, AND FOLLOWED THROUGH WITH THE WORDS AND THE KISS THAT I FELT GOD HAD ASKED ME TO SAY AND DO.. BILL'S RESPONSE TO ME WAS RECEIVED, AND IN RETURN HE HAD KISSED ME ON THE CHEEK AND TOLD ME THAT HE LOVED ME TOO.

I WENT BACK TO MY SEAT AND RE-ENGAGED MYSELF IN THE SPIRIT OF WORSHIP, WITH THE REST OF THE FELLOWSHIP. SUNDAY SERVICE ENDED AND MY FAMILY AND I SPENT THE REST OF THAT DAY, AS WE ALWAYS HAVE IN THE PAST, ENJOYING LUNCH AND WATCHING OLD MOVIES ON THE TELEVISION.

ALMOST A WEEK HAD PASSED AND LIFE WAS AS NORMAL AS IT COULD BE. MY WIFE AND I HAD OUR ROUTINE DOWN TO A PRECISE SCHEDULE CONCERNING OUR JOBS AND OUR KIDS.

IT WAS SATURDAY MORNING AND I WAS READING THE PAPER AND ENJOYING A FRESH CUP OF STARBUCKS FRENCH ROAST COFFEE WHEN THE CALL CAME. IT WAS A NEIGHBOR THAT LIVED ACROSS THE STREET FROM MY PARENT'S HOUSE. AT FIRST I COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT SHE WAS SAYING, THEN THE WORDS SANK IN. MY BROTHER HAD BEEN KILLED IN A CAR ACCIDENT, AND MY MOTHER WAS THE ONLY ONE HOME TO RECEIVE THE NEWS. I HUNG UP THE PHONE AND STOOD THERE IN DISBELIEF, TRYING TO SORT OUT THIS RUSH OF EMOTION THAT HAD STARTED TO PERMEATE MY SENSES, THEN ADRENALIN MOTIVATED ME TO GET TO MY PARENTS HOUSE AS SOON AS I COULD. AS I DROVE UP THE DRIVEWAY TO MY PARENTS HOUSE I COULD SEE TWO POLICE OFFICERS, THE NEIGHBOR, AND A CLERGYMAN STANDING AROUND WHAT APPEARED TO BE MY BROKEN MOTHER. SHE WAS ON HER KNEES WEEPING AS I HAD NEVER SEEN HER BEFORE. I WENT STRAIGHT TO HER AND HELD HER AS IF A PARENT WAS HOLDING A CHILD, BUT THIS TIME I WAS THE PARENT AND MY MOTHER WAS THE CHILD.

MY FATHER WAS FINALLY CONTACTED, AND ARRIVED HOME TO BE WITH MY OTHER TWO BROTHERS, MOTHER AND I. AS I SAT THERE IN THE LIVING ROOM AND OBSERVED THEIR GRIEF AND DISBELIEF, I REALIZED THERE WAS A PEACE ABOUT MYSELF THAT I COULD NOT COMPREHEND. SHOULD I HAVE FELT PAIN AND GRIEF? WELL, YES I DID BUT IT WAS DIFFERENT. IT WAS AS IF I HAD UNDERSTANDING. DEATH; WHAT A STRANGE REALITY WE ALL HAVE TO FACE.

AS I WENT ON A WALK TO SORT THROUGH MY THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS, I SUDDENLY HAD A MENTAL PICTURE OF THE LAST TIME I SAW MY BROTHER. IT WAS SUNDAY PAST, WHEN I WAS LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD TO SAY GOODBYE TO HIM.

*HAD I LET PRIDE WIN AND NOT BEEN OBEDIENT TO WHAT GOD HAD FOR ME THAT DAY, I WOULD HAVE MISSED THE BLESSING THAT I WAS EXPERIENCING AT THAT MOMENT.*

*THIS WAS A LESSON THAT I WILL NEVER FORGET. WHEN YOU HEAR THAT LITTLE VOICE DEEP WITHIN YOUR SOUL, DO NOT LET PRIDE GET IN THE WAY, IT COULD BE YOUR LAST GOODBYE. SO NOW IN MY LIFE WHEN I HEAR THAT STILL SMALL VOICE, I ACT WITH CONFIDENCE THAT THIS IS WHAT GOD HAS PLANNED FOR ME THAT VERY DAY. THEY SAY A PURE HEART AND GRACIOUS SPEECH CAN CAUSE YOU TO HAVE FRIENDSHIP WITH KINGS, BUT WHEREVER YOUR TREASURE IS THERE LIES YOUR HEART SET ON THE INVISIBLE OR TANGIBLE THINGS.*

*ASHES TO ASHES AND DUST TO DUST EVERY CRADLE WILL ONE DAY SWING OVER THE GRAVE. WHAT WILL YOU CHOOSE WITH YOUR LAST BREATH OF FREEDOM? FOR DEATH SELDOM SLEEPS LONG AT ALL THESE DAYS.*

*WRITTEN BY: CHUCK THOMAS*

This was written by Bill's wife for a family tree memory book:

*I'LL NEVER FORGET THE FIRST TIME I LAID EYES ON BILL. I THOUGHT HE WAS THE BEST LOOKING BOY (HE WAS 17 AT THE TIME) I HAD EVER SEEN. HE HAD SANDY BLOND HAIR, ELVIS PRESLEY CHEEKBONES, AND THE BEST NOSE I'VE EVER SEEN. HIS EYES WERE A BEAUTIFUL BLUE THAT WERE SO SINCERE. HE WAS BUILT LIKE A BRICK HOUSE, MUSCULAR ALL THE WAY UP TO HIS NECK. THAT SUMMER NIGHT OF '78 WAS A BRIEF ENCOUNTER (AT THE 7-11 BY HIS HOUSE), WE ONLY SPOKE FOR A MOMENT ABOUT AN INCIDENT THAT HAD JUST HAPPENED. HE HOPPED INTO HIS DAD'S RED TRUCK AND OFF HE WENT. WE OFFICIALLY MET.*

*SEPT. 26, 1978, AT SCHOOL ONE DAY, I WAS TALKING TO A MUTUAL FRIEND. AS HE WAS APPROACHING, I WALKED OFF TO GET TO CLASS, BUT OUR FRIEND CALLED ME BACK AND SAID BILL WOULD LIKE TO MEET ME. THE REST IS HISTORY AS THEY SAY. WE WERE TOGETHER MANY YEARS. OUR DAUGHTER JULIE WAS BORN ALMOST 7 YEARS TO THE DAY (SEPT. 25, 1985).*

*BILL WAS A VERY CHARISMATIC PERSON WHOM YOU WERE DRAWN TO, GIRLS AND GUYS ALIKE, EVERYONE JUST LOVED BEING AROUND HIM.*

*BILL WAS VERY SMART. I REMEMBER SEEING HIS TRIG MATH HOMEWORK AND THINKING WHAT IS THAT? IT CAME EASY FOR HIM. HE WAS ALSO VERY NICE. BILL NEVER LOOKED DOWN ON ANYONE. HE WAS VERY POPULAR, BUT HE TREATED EVERYONE THE SAME. HE WOULD TALK TO PEOPLE HE DIDN'T KNOW ALL THE TIME.*

*HIS FRIENDS MEANT EVERYTHING TO HIM. THE FIRST TIME I EVER SAW HIM CRY WAS WHEN HIS BEST FRIEND, MIKE TOLLIVER, MOVED AWAY TO GO TO COLLEGE.*

*BILL WAS FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO INHERIT HIS DAD'S SENSE OF HUMOR. THE FIRST TIME I MET FRANK HE SAID, "SHE'S NOT AS UGLY AS YOU SAID, BILL." I IMMEDIATELY WAS AT EASE WITH HIS DAD, AND THAT WAS THE WAY BILL WAS. HE MADE YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE INSTANTLY. HE LIKED PEOPLE TO LAUGH AND HAVE A GOOD TIME.*

*BILL ON THE OTHER HAND, WAS NOT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY. HE WOULD DEFEND HIMSELF, THOSE HE LOVED, AND THOSE WHO COULDN'T DEFEND THEMSELVES. I HAD HEARD STORIES ABOUT HIS INVOLVEMENT IN FIGHTS, BUT I HAD NEVER WITNESSED ANY. THAT IS UNTIL ONE NIGHT (AT THE 7-11). WHEN A FEW GUYS HAD PULLED UP NEXT TO US AND WERE SAYING THINGS. I REMEMBERED BOBBY AND WOODY WERE WITH US. BILL WAS HAVING WORDS WITH ONE OF THE GUYS WHEN ALL OF A SUDDEN A HUGE GUY (WHO WAS TALLER AND A GOOD 50LBS*

HEAVIER THAN BILL) STARTED WALKING TOWARD BILL. I STARTED CRYING AND PLEADING WITH THE GUY NOT TO DO ANYTHING TO BILL, AND HE KEPT MOVING TOWARD HIM SAYING HE WAS GOING TO KICK HIS A\*\*. BILL DIDN'T EVEN KNOW HE WAS COMING AT HIM. THE NEXT THING I KNOW HE GETS UP TO BILL, THEN HE'S FLIPPING THROUGH THE AIR AND LANDS FLAT ON HIS BACK WITH BILL ON TOP. NEEDLESS TO SAY THAT GUY'S FRIENDS HAD TO HELP HIM GET IN THE CAR AND THEY LEFT. I NEVER DOUBTED BILL'S ABILITY AGAIN!

SPORTS WERE BILL'S ULTIMATE LOVE. THE EXCITEMENT, THE RUSH, AND THE COMRADESHIP HE HAD WITH HIS TEAMMATES. I, ALONG WITH MANY OTHERS, ENJOYED WATCHING HIM PLAY. HE BROUGHT EXCITEMENT TO THE GAME. THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT HIS PRESENCE. HE TOLD ME HIS FAVORITE SPORT WAS BASKETBALL, BUT HE JUST DIDN'T HAVE THE HEIGHT REQUIRED. FOOTBALL WAS HIS GAME, AND HE MEANT BUSINESS WHEN HE PLAYED. HE RECEIVED "KAMIKAZE" AND "BIG HIT" OF THE WEEK MANY TIMES. HIS NICKNAME WAS "BIG HEAD", AND I DIDN'T KNOW IF IT WAS BECAUSE HE REALLY DID HAVE A BIG HEAD OR BECAUSE HE WAS AWESOME OUT THERE AND HE KNEW IT! HE USED TO TELL ME HE LOVED THE PAIN HE FELT AFTER A GAME, BECAUSE HE KNEW HE GAVE IT HIS ALL.

BILL PLAYED BASEBALL TOO. I DIDN'T ENJOY WATCHING HIM PLAY BASEBALL AS MUCH, BECAUSE IF HE STRUCK OUT HE WOULD GET SOOO MAD. THAT GAME COULD REALLY FRUSTRATE HIM. IF HE WASN'T HAVING A GOOD ONE, HE WOULD THROW HELMETS OR BATS. I REMEMBER ONE TIME WHEN HE WAS PLAYING ON AN ADULT BASEBALL LEAGUE AFTER WE HAD JULIE. HE WOULD GET SO MAD AT GAMES THAT I QUIT GOING TO WATCH. I HAD MISSED ABOUT 2 GAMES WHEN HIS TEAMMATES STARTED CALLING ME, THEY SAID, "EVIE YOU GOT TO COME BACK HE'S IN BETTER CONTROL WHEN YOU AND JULIE ARE THERE." SO WE DID.

I WILL FINISH WITH A WORD ABOUT OUR CHILDREN AND US. BILL AND I GREW INTO ADULTS TOGETHER. HE'S SO MUCH A PART OF WHAT I'VE BECOME TODAY. HE TAUGHT ME TO BE PROUD OF WHO I AM.

I WILL FOREVER BE BLESSED THAT I WAS AN IMPORTANT PART OF HIS LIFE FOR MANY YEARS. I WAS VERY HAPPY TO BE HIS WIFE. I ADORED HIM AND WILL FOREVER THINK HE WAS A BEAUTIFUL PERSON INSIDE AND OUT! THIS IS NOT TO SAY WE DIDN'T HAVE OUR PROBLEMS, WE DID, BUT ALL THAT STAYS ETCHED IN MY MEMORIES ARE THE WONDERFUL TIMES. THE PROBLEMS WE DID HAVE, WHEN LOOKED THROUGH MORE MATURE EYES SEEM SO MINOR NOW.

WHEN I THINK ABOUT BILL, THE THINGS THAT COME TO MIND ARE HIS EYES, HIS SMILE, HIS LAUGH, AND THE LOOKS HE WOULD GIVE. I'LL NEVER FORGET WHEN JULIE WAS BORN, HE RAN AROUND THAT DELIVERY ROOM TELLING EVERYONE HE HAD A BABY GIRL. IT WAS FUNNY. THE NURSES WERE SAYING, "WE KNOW WE WERE THERE." HE ADORED JULIE. HE DID EVERYTHING HE COULD WITH HER. THEY DANCED IN THE LIVING ROOM FLOOR AS WELL WRESTLED AROUND THERE TOO. WE HAD A TINY LITTLE PLASTIC BLOW UP POOL IN THE GARAGE THAT SHE COULD BARELY FIT IN, BUT HE WOULD SOME HOW STAND IN IT WITH HER. HE WAS ALWAYS CLOSE BEHIND HER WHEN SHE RODE HER MINI ATC. WHEN HE GOT HOME FROM WORK, FIRST THING HE WANTED TO DO WAS HOLD HER. IN THE MORNINGS SHE WOULD RUN AND JUMP ON OUR BED, HE LOVED IT. THEY USED TO LOVE TO WATCH MOVIES TOGETHER TOO. HE ALWAYS TREATED HER LIKE A PRINCESS; SHE COULD DO NO WRONG EVER. HE NEVER WANTED TO SAY NO TO HER. I CAN REMEMBER HIM SAYING HER NAME, HE WOULD SAY JUUUULIE! OF COURSE YOU CAN.

IMAGINE HOW HAPPY HE WAS WHEN BOBBY WAS BORN. HE HAD HIS BOY! HE COULD NOT HAVE BEEN HAPPIER. HE WOULD TELL PEOPLE, "I GOT MY BOY NOW." HE HAD HIS NEW WRESTLING PARTNER. JULIE USED TO GET SO JEALOUS. BILL

WOULD HAVE TO HOLD THEM BOTH AT THE SAME TIME. HE WAS AN ABSOLUTELY WONDERFUL FATHER. HE DOTTED ON HIS CHILDREN. THEY WERE THE APPLES OF HIS EYE. HE ALWAYS SPOKE SWEETLY TO THEM. HE HELPED WITH ALL THEIR NEEDS, BATHING, DRESSING, FEEDING, AND YES, CHANGING DIAPERS TOO. IT NEVER BOTHERED HIM. HE ENJOYED BEING WITH THEM. HE WAS VERY PROUD OF THEM BOTH.

I AM BLESSED TO HAVE HAD BILL'S CHILDREN BECAUSE HE IS A PART OF WHO THEY ARE. I GET TO SEE A SIGN OF BILL EVERYDAY. I SEE IT EITHER IN THEIR EYES, THEIR SMILE, OR JUST A LOOK THEY GIVE ME. IT ALWAYS BRINGS ME BACK TO MEMORIES OF BILL. JULIE HAS HIS ELVIS PRESLEY CHEEKS AND THEY BOTH HAVE HIS BIG HEAD! THEY HAVE HIS PERSONALITY IN MANY WAYS, ESPECIALLY BOBBY. THEY LOVE SPORTS AND THEIR ATHLETIC ABILITY IS INSTINCTIVE. THEIR COMPETITIVE DRIVE IS JUST LIKE THEIR DAD'S.

IN CLOSING THERE IS SO MUCH MORE I COULD WRITE, BUT IT WOULD BE A BOOK. BILL IS AND ALWAYS WILL BE MISSED.

EVIE THOMAS-STRADER

**Bill's symbol is a big heart.**

**Sherry Wright Conway's son, Sean Wright (4-11-84), died from an overdose of Rx, 9-3-05.**

Sherry shares her precious son with us:

*Hello Dinah!*

*Sean Robert Wright's symbols are the Kentucky Wildcats and children. I brought him up believing that you should always give back to the community. He was at one time going to be a cop and was in the Lexington Kentucky Explorer program. He also attended the YMCA when he was six years old, and as he got older, became a counselor. He also volunteered for the JCs.*

*He was so involved in the community. Sean loved life and people. He helped coach T-ball with kids in Campbellsville and was always trying to give them good advice on how to stay active and stay out of trouble. He was a remarkable young man. He would have graduated in May of this year with a Bachelor's degree to be a counselor with kids. I was and still am so proud to have 21 years with such a wonderful son.*

*He loved his family dearly. Sean also loved birds. Last Monday I was very sad and missing him terribly and was looking out my kitchen window and this redbird was on my deck. It turned completely around and stared right back at me. We must have stared at each other for 10 minutes.*

*I could go on and on about what a wonderful young man he was. He had a heart of gold. Willing to do or help others. You can go to Legacy.com on the guest list and read all the different responses from people about Sean. Especially from me. I can't seem to get enough. I visited that wonderful site of all those special children who are now with God. Someday I know I will see my son again. Although I miss him so much but, at least I know he is safe and I know where he is now. I want to thank you for all your help. May God bless you.*

*LOL Sherry Wright Conway*

Sherry, like so many of us, change symbols as we travel in our grief. I changed Young Jim's from angels to horses to Pegasus. It is as if our children are changing also. Sherry wrote later:

*He is free now. And he can fly anywhere in anyone's heart. He loved birds. Whenever I see a Red Cardinal I always think of Sean. Free to fly anywhere. And he is with God now.*

**Sean's symbol is a red Cardinal.**

**Charlotte Martin's son, Keith James (1-16-71), died in a drowning accident, 2-21-97.**

Those of you who have been to J.I.M.'s conference will remember Charlotte, she gave us the "Live Forever" plants. Charlotte has been busy making a video. I have seen it and it is excellent. The video is to help ministers and others be able to provide the right kind of help we grieving parents need from our ministers.

Charlotte wrote:

*Dear Dinah,*

*Thank you so much for watching my video and writing me back.*

*My first showing is scheduled for March 23<sup>rd</sup> for approximately 35 bereaved parents.*

*You asked me what my plan was for the video. One plan that I have is to take it to every church that will allow me to show it. So far I have gotten an unbelievable response. I've asked eight pastors, and seven have said yes! After showing it, I plan to provide a question/answer time.*

*If the president of New Leaf Resources likes it, she said they would do a story about me in their grief magazine and also sell the video through the magazine.*

*It took me eleven months to make the video. I decided to make the video because I encountered so many other bereaved parents having similar experiences as I was having in needing help, support and understanding, yet finding little if any at all. I simply could not sit by and do nothing.*

*I am hoping to have the video available for sale by April 3. Until I get my own website, I will sell them from my home address. I plan to sell VHS tapes for \$15.00 and the DVDs for \$20.00.*

If you are interested in buying her video, her address is:  
Charlotte Martin  
1413 Rose Ave.  
Owensboro, KY 42301

**Keith's symbol is karate.**

**Tony & Cynthia Pierce's daughter, Shelly (2-25-67), was killed in an auto accident, 6-14-86.**

Cynthia sent this email:

*Thank you so much Dinah, I just went and read about Jim. I am so sorry, but what a wonderful tribute you have given him. Shelly was also killed in a car accident after she had graduated from high school. Dinah, it has been 18 years, and I feel like I have not done anything to keep her memory alive. We have done a lot; put in chimes at Church in memory of Shelly. And I give in memory of Shelly all the time. But I miss her so much as I know you miss Jim.*

*Do you miss being a Grandmother? I miss that more than anything. I don't have any family left. Shelly was the only child, I am the only child, and Mom was the only child and my Grandmother was the only child. They have all gone to heaven now. So I feel so alone. I have a wonderful husband named Tony, Shelly was his pride and joy. He still spends a lot of time over at the cemetery. But I just cannot tell people that this has happened to that it will get better, maybe better but a piece of your heart is gone and you cannot get it back. Dinah I would love to add Shelly's birth date and Angel date: Shelly Sue Pierce: Born Feb. 25th 1967 and the accident was June 14th*

1986. Thank you so much for thinking about me. I am going back to the website and read some more, I have put it under my favorites.

Your Friend,  
Cynthia

Shelly's website is: <http://www.geocities.com/myangelshelly/>

**Shelly's symbol is a unicorn.**

**Linda Rice's daughter, Tina (5-5-72), was missing for almost 3 years before they found her murdered, 3-15-00.**

This was posted on Tina's website:

*On March 15, 2000, Tina Marie McQuaig was reported missing after failing to return home from work. Tina clocked out of work at Shands Hospital in Jacksonville Florida at 4:50 p.m. Four days later on March 19, 2000, Tina's car is found in the parking lot of a Wal-Mart in Jacksonville. Jacksonville Sheriff's Office missing persons and homicide units are working the case.*

*Tina's husband, five year old son, along with her family are still awaiting news.*

December 26-02 Tina was found and this was posted on her website:

*With a heavy heart I come here today to tell you that our long 3 year search for our Tina has come to a tragic close. Remains found on December 26, 2002. After waiting 13 weeks for DNA test results, they proved that the remains belong to our beloved Tina. Although we now have some closure, this tragic story continues into a new journey for my family. There is a killer on the loose. Someone has information regarding the murder of my daughter and must come forward.*

Linda explains Tina's symbol:

*Tina's symbol is a butterfly... I feel her presence when a butterfly comes to visit me.*

I hope you will visit her website:

<http://missingtinamariemcquaig.homestead.com/memorial.html>

**Tina's symbol is a butterfly.**

If it is true, "You are what you eat," since I eat chocolate, I must be smooth, sweet and loved by all. At least that's my interpretation of this statement!

My email address is: [dinah@ucumberland.edu](mailto:dinah@ucumberland.edu)

The website's address is <http://www.ucumberland.edu/lamentations/>