
LAMENTATIONS

Issue 106

middle

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YES, MY SON IS STILL DEAD . . . BUT THANKS FOR ASKING

My son has been dead for almost a year. Occasionally someone will still ask me how I am getting along and will express their concern and sympathy.

I always expect them not to ask about me, but to ask if Wolfie is still dead. Now I know that someone who has not lost a child would never entertain such an idea. When someone dies, they die. No questions asked. Finito. That's it. But to someone who has lost a child, it is the hardest concept of the whole situation to handle. Intellectually, accepting that he has died is relatively easy. Emotionally, it's accepting that the loneliness is not going to be for a finite amount of time that is so difficult. One seems to have the impression that this is just something to be waited out, and if we can be strong enough, then we will be rewarded by having our child back again.

As all of you know, there is a common feeling you have when you learn that you have lost child. You would do anything, literally anything, to get them back. The night after my son died. I had a dream in which the Devil himself came to me and casually announced that he was prepared to deliver Wolf to me unharmed. Not just alive, but unharmed. Wolf was killed in a terrible auto accident and had not only suffered many broken bones, but had bled to death. Some years ago I had seen a movie called Angel Heart, in which my favorite actor, Robert DeNiro, portrayed the devil in a fascinating performance. DeNiro's devil was polite, cultured and patient.

In my dream, the Devil had the same facade....He told me that bringing a child back to life...is something that he does on a daily basis. In the dream, I couldn't help but have confidence in him. He seemed so sure about what he was capable of doing. I remember saying the words over and over until I woke up, "Whatever it takes. Whatever it takes..." And at that moment, I am convinced I would have done anything.

The next night...! I dreamed that the hospital called and said there had been a terrible mistake. I still can recall the hospital spokesman talking to me. "Mama mia, what a mistake. Did I say he was dead? Of course he is not dead. We have him here in ICU. He is hurt, you understand, but nothing we can't fix. He will be home before you know it. You can come see him when you want to." And then I woke up. And do you know that now, nearly a year later, I still wait for some change in Wolfie's condition. Don't ask me what I expect to happen, because I haven't the vaguest idea. I seem to have this notion that something will happen. He can't possibly stay dead.

Certainly not forever. For me, the hardest thing about having to deal with Wolf's death is accepting that not only it did happen, but also that this death is something that is non-negotiable. I'm sure that many times you have had something happen to you or have seen someone or something that you knew your child would be interested in hearing about. I know it has happened to me many times. The first thing that goes through your mind is, "Well, I can't tell him now, but I'll tell him later." The later never comes. I don't know if I will ever talk to him again; all I know is that I won't be seeing him today.

The point of all this is that while intellectually we know our child is dead, emotionally we go through some pretty strange things, for a darn long time, while learning to cope. Oh, how I miss my child. I know you miss yours, too.

And Wolfie? Thanks for asking, but he is still dead.

Lola Jordan, TCF Montgomery, Alabama
(Lola's son, Wolf Jordan, died 3/17/91 at age 21)/
~lovingly lifted from Bereaved Parents USA

A MOTHER'S HOPE
By Betty Lineberger
BP/USA of Marion County FL

When our son died, I hoped it was a mistake. It was not. I hoped it was a dream. It was not. Before my son died, I hoped for enough time in that day to clean my house, provide my family with clean laundry, taxi service and healthy meals. I loved dinner time with my family. After my son died, I did not know what day it was, cleaning our home or doing laundry were things I no longer thought of. I did not cook, I did not shop for food, I did

not eat. I hoped he would come back. He did not. I hoped I would gain understanding. I did not. I could not understand how I could wake up on a perfectly normal morning and my son was gone from his room, gone from our home and gone from our lives. I hoped for acceptance. I found none. I hoped those around me would understand me. They did not. How could my beautiful, vibrant, healthy son be gone?

I hoped for peace. I had none. I hoped for sleep. I had none. I hoped for courage to resume my daily life. My life was out of my control. The only thing I was sure of in the early days of my grief was that I knew our life would never be the same again. I hoped this empty feeling would go away. It did not. I hoped that some day my family would be normal again. We were not. I hoped I could stop looking for our son in every young man I saw that was tall, slim and had sandy colored curly hair. I could not. I hoped I could become the parent to my surviving children that I knew they deserved. I could not I knew how much they were hurting but I could not help myself and I could not help my children. My younger son needed my comfort. My daughter, expecting her own child needed my comfort. I was their mother but there was no comfort in me to give. I hoped I could be a wife to my husband. I could not.

I never hoped for laughter. How could I laugh when my son was dead. I hoped the feelings that consumed my every waking moment would somehow change so I did not feel as though I could never again be in a public place without crying. At 6 months after my son died, I hoped for a reprieve. I no longer could stand the pain and I saw my doctor. I knew he must have an answer to my question, "How long will I feel like this?" He did not. I had begun attending Bereaved Parents meetings and hardly spoke a word at the first meeting. I could not stop talking at my second meeting. I had found the glimmer of hope that I had been searching for. I hoped this all consuming grief would never again happen to my family. But it did! When my daughter in law was 6 months pregnant, my son told me their baby had died. How I grieved for my son. I knew what he was feeling. I hoped to be able to help him and his wife. I could not.

I then realized that all of the things I had hoped for had begun to come about but had taken a lot of time. I hoped my son and his wife could hold on long enough for time to help and heal. They have. When my son died, I never hoped for joy. I could not imagine joy as part of our lives ever again. But there is joy. When my son was a baby, a toddler, a young child, a teenager and young man, I watched over him. I thought I would watch over him for my entire life. But I was wrong. I hope with all my heart that he is watching over me.

I now have the understanding I hoped for. I have peace. I finally sleep. I find joy every time I see a tall, slim young man with sandy colored curly hair. I do not cry as often. So there is hope. We all have a future; we have memories. No matter how long our children were part of our lives, we have memories. The first time I realized that joy would one day be part of my life was the day I remembered a trick my son played on his little brother. He gave him a glass of buttermilk instead of regular milk and pretended it was a mistake. We have laughed so many times about this little story. I can still see the twinkle in his eye. I can hear my son and daughter as he made up names for her to tease her. Oh, how he loved to laugh. I remember the look on his face when I discovered the snake he put in my garden terrarium. I know the joy I feel every time I think of my son, share a memory with someone or look at pictures of him will never change.

My hope as a Mother is that we all will find peace and cherish the joy our children have brought to our lives.

~reprinted from BP USA Oct/Nov/Dec 2004 Newsletter

Grief Grafts

Jeff and Paula Snyder's son, Johnathon (5-2-91) was killed when a rod fell on his head, 9-26-98.

Thank you so much Dinah....your card brightened my day.....Eight years later, not many friends and family call or stop by. I don't know if they have forgotten, or remember and just don't think to let me know they are remembering.....

Eight years! Seems like yesterday, yet like eternity since I saw my precious Johnathon alive and playing....I miss his sweet smile.....I miss his little 7 year old "outdoor, sweaty sweet smell" when I hugged and kissed him after baseball....I miss his stutter, I miss hearing "Mmmmoommy!"

Thank you so much Dinah, for remembering my Johnathon!

What you do for bereaved parents everywhere is to be admired.....you forever have my permission to add my e mails to any and all of your issues.

*Love and Hugs,
Paula*

Johnathon's symbol is a butterfly.

**Tom & Carol Stork's son, Thomas (9-29-86) died from cancer
PNET, 12-7-96.**

Another parent who feels the spirit of their child around them:

Thank you so much--today he would be 20--still so hard to be without him--in body, though we know he's with us always in spirit. He loved all things about nature--a huge spider has been guarding our front door every night this month--feel he's (or maybe it's a she) a gift from Thomas.

*Hugs to you and yours,
Carol Stork*

I emailed Carol to see if I could include her note in the newsletter.
Her response:

We'd be honored for you to use it--the spider's still there every night--takes most of its web away in the daytime and rebuilds it each night. Fascinating! CCS

Thomas' symbol is a lion.

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

Dawn shares one of her poems:

I love to share my poems with everyone, so why not my tattoo also. Thank you so much for the card you had sent on Matt's angel date. Especially liked the little gold bees and butterflies that were in it. I thought about getting a tattoo with Matt's name and Mickey Mouse since he loved Mickey, but I wanted something more personal, that would match a design that we had put on Matt's headstone, so I went with the "Jesus Loves Me" precious moments. (A picture of Dawn's tattoo was in the 105 newsletter)

It's been 3 years now and I just felt like I needed to do something more for him, to honor his life and to give thanks for the 2 years we were blessed to have him. Something that says he is still here with us. And, like I said, I got him on my left arm so that he is close to my heart..... I saw the other tattoos in the September newsletter and they are really great, I'm glad I'm not the only one who has memorialized their children like that...

*Thank you for your thoughts and prayers,
James, Dawn, Kaden and Angel Matt*

www.vinsons-n-angels.com

I'm Thankful for my Friend's that Care
And for their Lives that I can Share
I'm Thankful for my Family Too
Cause they are the Bond that holds like Glue
The pain in my Heart is so Deep
I know the Angels cry when I Weep
But it's hard to feel so Blue
When I know God's love is so True
As bad as our Lives are now and for a while will Be
I'm Thankful that God's watching over Me
I'm Thankful for God's love
And his Grace from Above
I'm Thankful for his Hands
And for his Footprints in the Sands
I'm Thankful for the Clouds in the Shy
And for God's Sweet by and By
I'm Thankful for the Moon and Stars
And for Jesus Salvation and his Scars
So I'm Thankful that he Bled and Died
And I know that the Angels Cried
For they brought down the Rain
So it could Wash away my Grief and Pain

Written 11/25/03

**Matthew's symbols are butterflies, an owl, a bus, balloons,
bubbles, fries and anything yellow.**

George and Ronnie Pazolt's son, Gary (9-29-81) died from suicide, 12-14-97.

Ronnie has written a book, A Mother's Lament: Understanding the Pain of Suicide. The book is about her son's death. If you are interested in her book, you may contact her at ourangel97@aol.com

Dear Dinah,

Thank you sooo very much for the email and for remembering our dear Gary. He would have been 25 years old today.

The poem lifted our hearts. But I do know that Gary is with young Jim and all the other angels.

I hope all is well in your family since your recent loss. (The death of my brother-in-law).

We are doing ok, my husband's arthritis is a bother and I just fractured my ankle.

Thank you again for your kindness.

Love & Peace,

Veronica, George & Sons

Gary Too From Heaven

Gary's symbol is an angel.

Stephen and Meredith Prue's son, Jeff Peak (3-10-90) died from auto-asphyxiation, 11-7-04.

Meredith and her opinion on "signs:"

Hello Guys!

Thought I'd share a story with you all.... I didn't QUITE find the humor in it on Saturday night... But now that it's Monday morning... the humor...KINDA... LOL is coming back...

So - When you're a Mourning Parent - we have a tendency to either see "signs" or get "signs" from our Angel... some call it wishful thinking, some think it's real - that's besides the point.... I guess for me - it depends on my frame of mind...

WELL, some Parents get Butterflies! or Beautiful Rainbows! Or Pennies/Dimes from Heaven...

My JEFF..... MY ANGEL.... He has decided to send his signs in a WAY that We could NEVER DOUBT that it was of his doing...

Again, YES AGAIN, we were visited by an ADORABLE CUTE CUDDLY - SKUNK!!!

Yes - and we have THREE DOGS.... This time the Puppy got NAILED!!!

So - let's all say add this little GROUP PRAYER to your daily prayers - PLEASE!....this one up to Jeffrey.... and please put in a request from his Skunked Mom to please start sending maybe cute little bunnies - or happy little butterflies.... MONEY perhaps?? DEAL????? Thanks!! LOL!!

and for those lucky peeps out there who don't have skunk or know what they smell like - well - I like to think of it about the same as that love ROTTEN CHICKEN smell..... ugh..... there's not enough LYSOL in the world that can mask it! Trust me on this one!!....

So - if I've been noticeably absent this weekend....- y'all know why now!! LOLOL

Jeff's symbols are drums and a peace sign.

Tony & Sue-Anne Aguilera's son, Lee (10-17-74) died from cancer, 8-14-00.

Sue-Anne sent a blanket email to friends:

MY DEAR FRIENDS

Hope you are all doing as well as to be expected.

Some of you I have written to already, so please forgive me if you get this twice.

I know Karen Lynn sent out an e-mail to a lot of her friends she connects with, a lot of whom are my friends too.

Some friends whom I had never connected with before wrote me, and wanted to connect, which is wonderful, especially in our situation. You can never have too many friends.

I believe though that some people took it as if I needed to connect because I had just lost my ANGEL, well as most of you know it has been six years August just past that I lost my ANGEL Lee.

Most of you know too, that I have multiple sclerosis, I am in a wheelchair now permanently, and only have the use of my left side, which of course means only having my left hand.

It is very frustrating at times for me, and have gone down hill since my Lee left me, gave up on things, like a lot of us do once our ANGEL'S are gone. But it was around a year that I felt I had to come out of my shell a little and start doing some things.

I met my first bereaved friend, who since we met, have stayed friends. She is the one that does everything for me, as she knows how hard it is. But from her, all of you and other people, because of your friendship and connections, I try and go on. Of course, I do try each day and go on for my Lee.

But there has been one thing that has been bothering me for the past few months, which I can't seem to cope with, and has put me in a very deep depression.

We have had Lee's ashes at home since he passed away. It was around; well a good few months ago, Tony, my hubby, and I were talking of a place where we would want to go after we passed away. My father-in-law has bought a family inside crypt for any family members that wanted to be with family. It is a beautiful cemetery and the inside is just as beautiful. To cut this long story short, we decided to put Lee there now, so at least when I go, I will know where he is, and I will be with him. But now that the time is getting closer to the date, I am beside myself, is it the right thing I am doing?

As Lee's Birthday is on October 17th, we were going to do it then; the father couldn't do it on that date, so we chose the weekend before. That Saturday happens to fall on the 14th, which was the date Lee passed away, August 14, 2000. All this is just building up inside me, and I am going crazy.

Thank you so very much for listening to me, and I am sorry this has been a long e-mail about my problems, please don't feel sorry for me, I will get through it. I would like your opinion though on what I should do, although I know it is up to me, but just to hear from other people helps.

THANKS TO YOU MY FRIENDS

HOPE TO KEEP IN TOUCH

MUCH LOVE

Sue-Anne /LEE

Sue-Anne has a request:

My Dear Friends

As you know, because of my MS illness and only having my left hand to work with, that it is difficult at the best of times. But really because I myself don't really know computers too well, so on some occasions I have asked some of you to make gifts, etc for me.

Well, for the most part, my friend has been keeping up my ANGEL Lee's site, and recently having just opened my ANGEL PAGE, I send them to my friend, she adds them, the same as when people send me gifts, I just forward them onto her. Special pages she does for Lee's special days, anything like that, and I was just about to open a cancer page.

My question to you my friends, do you know anyone that will do what my friend has been doing, maybe webmasters, who could I get in touch with.

All of you being mother's of ANGEL'S I just don't want my ANGEL Lee's site to close because of this. So if you could help me, or know of someone I can get in touch with, even if I have to pay, that is fine.

<http://www.angelfire.com/blues/4evermyangelmyangelleeag@hotmail.com>

WHY DOES CANCER TAKE THE ONE'S WE LOVE?

Lee was an amazing artist, I hope you will look at his website and see his talent not only as an artist but also a very moving, insightful writer.

Lee's symbol is an artist's palette.

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

Nancy wrote the following card:

Dear, dear Dinah,

We are so touched, so overwhelmed by your caring ministry. Your latest card really was "right on" (as the kids would say).

*If only we could see her one more time in the clouds, in the stars,
sailing by as she did so often.*

We love you for what you do, but more, for who you are!

Paul & Nancy Hudack

Mary Beth's symbol is a star.

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

The Coynes have a foundation in memory of Colette and have been very active in raising money for sun safety awareness.

Dinah:

Thanks - How do you keep up with us all? I have attached a poem for this time of year. I wrote it for the dinner dance journal. We are honoring a Mom who passed two weeks after her 50th birthday on Halloween, last year. Colette was buried on Halloween and amazingly they both loved Halloween. I spoke before the Rotary, Diana's husband is a member. They are taking up the mission of sun safety and plan to "turn on" other clubs on L.I. We finally got the State to pass a tanning regulation, following Long Island.

All the beaches in Nassau and Suffolk Co. have posted warning signs re the sun and the state unveiled their sign at Jones Beach in July. Amazing how the foundation is growing. Mary just read me an article in today's Wall Street Journal where I was quoted. The sad thing is - the disease is still growing and still so many folks don't have a clue. Of course, without our work we would be in a dark hole somewhere!!

*Give yourselves a hug,
Colette & Patty*

Pumpkins & Memories

*Fall is the time for Pumpkins and such
A glint in the eye, makes one wonder what's up?
Candies and goodies shared freely with all,*

Spooks and goblins, for big folk and small.

*Joy filled Halloweens, enjoyed by so many
Crisp happy days, alas darkened too soon.
Laughter and giggles; shedding sadness or gloom.
Except for that season, filled with dismay;
In our hearts thinking never, would we get through the day?*

*How quickly they ended - far too early we know
Yet always and ever, those memories still glow.
Treats in abundance, tricks on some, too!
A Parade of our costumes scary yet few,
Would forego all the mischief and fun saying "Boo".*

*Now those ventures are viewed, from afar
Yet you are remembered as we look to the stars
Not a doubt for a moment, with us all, every day
Particularly on Halloween, in your own special way.*

*We know you are watchful, as life's challenges are met
How blessed are we all, for the example you set
The lessons you taught through your journey in life
Strengthens our endeavors, keeping goodness in sight*

*Because of you we embark on a mission
Continuing a **Legacy of Hope**, with determination.
We vow to educate, to prevent sadness that comes,
Silently, unexpectedly, from the Rays of the Sun.*

*Of course there are questions, why is it so?
Difficult still accepting you had to go.
Quietly often, when alone with our thoughts,
Sadness wells up and tears can't be fought*

*Faith teaches us much, yet a model were you
Accepting and preparing us, for the moment soon due
With your heart filled with love, words softly whispered are mine
You physically left,
For your spiritual odyssey in time!*

Colette's symbol is a sunflower.

**David & Cindy Jo Greever's daughter, Michelle (8-24-84) died
from being hit by car waiting for a bus, 11-5-93.**

Cindy Jo wrote this poem on my birthday, October 11th :

Michelle Marie Greever
1984~1993
So Loved and Missed

Thirteen Years

*Oh GOD! How can this be?
Since I last saw you Michelle
And held you close to me...*

*Whoever could have known
That November day back in 1993
All that you were
Would soon become just a Memory*

*That nine years of holding you
And watching you grow
Would now turn to memories
For the rest of my tomorrows*

*Why did God want you?
You were only nine and the apple of my eye
You brought me nothing but Joy
And I will miss you till the day I die!*

*I will always love you
And hold you dear to my heart
You are so loved and missed Michelle
My sweet Angel, my Belle, from the start...*

Love Mommy
October 11, 2006
Copywrite Cindy Jo Greever
www.geocities.com/michellemaries

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

Robert & Jackie Searl's sons, Alex (10-13-65) died from a heart arrhythmia, 6-7-96, and Dan Harbison (4-6-61) died from an inoperable brain tumor, 4-30-00.

Jackie has some good ideas:

Happy belated birthday lady!

Just 60, you are still a young thing and look at what all you are doing. I know your Jim, and our Alex and Dan are constantly saying to each other...is that really our moms? They would be proud of what and how we have grown and especially the help we offer to others...for I know Jim was loving and giving as were Alex and Dan.

The acorn does not fall far from the tree...so we are doing just exactly what they would want us to do.

You are so right about doing things for yourself. It can be as simple as planting those pansies for fall and winter beauty, preparing something they really enjoyed eating and remembering them when you do.

One Christmas Robert and I went to San Francisco and took a helicopter ride (pre 9-11-01) and when asked if we would like to be shown the Golden Gate Bridge the way the pilot shows it...well the next thing we knew we were diving under the golden gate bridge in this helicopter...I thought for sure I would be seeing Alex and Dan any second white knuckles and all. Well, what a ride that was and I just knew the boys would say "you go mama and Robert."

For Christmas last year, instead of purchasing more stuff for family and friends that already have too much anyway, we spent their gift money for a "special needy family" in our community and did this in the boys' memory. Instead of family and friends receiving a gift they received a lovely

card with the message saying that a donation had been in their name and in memory of Alex and Dan to this special family.

It is amazing how wonderful your heart sings when something like this takes place.

We always release beautiful balloons at Thanksgiving and Christmas and other holidays along with their birthdays and other anniversary dates in their memory. We do this at sunset and watch the balloon until it is out of sight. Sometimes I get the ones that are figures such as Clifford the big red dog...boy is that a sight in the atmosphere. If I were in a plane and saw that, I think I would bail out. Anyway it is a wonderful, fun way to remember the boys.

I know they would want us to be happy in remembering them for they were happy little boys and young men...so when sadness creeps in and it will every so often...I can hear them say...ok that's enough time for your sadness, go do something great for yourself or someone else...and you know what? It works every time.

My mom is 91 and still runs circles around me and I will be 64, yikes!! the day after Christmas and I do not begin to have her energy...so you and I have something to goal for...91...in fact she says she is 90 & 1/2 she will officially be 91 January 4th. She is my inspiration in so many ways and the boys called her Grand Mamma Lois and loved her dearly.

Hope you ate lots of ice cream and cake...I plan to for sure.

*Love you,
Jackie*

When I asked Jackie if I could use her email because we all have “pity parties,” this was her response:

Yes you can use it.

Believe me, I have those parties, however, I am usually the only one attending...no one brings refreshments such as cake or ice-cream so I try to get over them real fast.

It helps me to have accountability buddies...I have one in Dallas, TX, and one in Jonesboro, GA...They allow me to and when they need the same we swap roles.

Found a long time ago it is not good to hold it in and even better to get it out, let it go and let God do his plan for me.

Love you,

Jackie

Jackie has a great idea having “accountability buddies.” Maybe you can find one on the list of parents who want to correspond with others. If you want to include your name on that list on the website, let me know.

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

Ann Sorbara’s daughter, Laura Kimble (11-5-68) died from surgery for a non-malignant brain tumor when complications arose after her surgery and several falls in the hospital when she wasn’t monitored by the staff, 10-19-02

Dinah,

Thank you so much for including me in your email list. You have a wonderful mission to fulfill and are doing a wonderful job of it. I'd love to send my daughter Laura's story at some point, but am so very busy right now. We must keep our children's memories alive. They lived, they loved, they laughed and their spirit is still alive. We do not die but simply go beyond a horizon we cannot see.

God bless you and please do keep me on your list.

Love

Ann

Indeed a fellow traveler on this journey of such sorrow

Laura Ann Kimble

11/5/68 - 10/19/02

Ann would like to hear from you, and I hope you will click on Laura’s website and read Ann’s poetry, etc.

laurasmom@optonline.net
www.geocities.com/dadtochris3/laura1.html

Laura’s story:

The Lord gathers me close to his heart, saying, be not afraid my child, fear not, You are my lamb and I've set you free, just let me lead and come

follow me...Swimming in the River of Tears... I lost my child...I no longer fit into the world I once knew and I've wandered aimlessly since, trying to find a place in my new reality. I'm a square peg trying to fit into a round hole. My heart, my soul and my life ended on October 19, 2002, on a sunny and beautiful Saturday morning at 8:30 a.m. My precious Lily died. My beautiful and loving daughter Laura, whom I called Lily since she was a little girl. I held her hand and stood by, with no power to bring her back to me, no power to stop the angel of death from taking her, no power to heal the illness that took her life. The day my heart stopped beating.

She was my best friend, flesh of my flesh and heart of my heart. We both had such a fantastic sense of humor that we could find almost anything about life and make a joke out of it. Those were happy times in my life. Having my Laura and my son Steve were my life.

Laura's first child, Julianne, was born in 1997 and I absolutely fell in love with this darling little girl... Julianne was another beautiful blessing added to my life. Four years later came our little boy Michael, another sweet joy. Michael cried so much from the day he was born. He cried unnaturally up until he was about 3 years old or so. That baby knew all along that his mommy was sick. I'm convinced. Otherwise, what reason could there have been for such a tremendously unhappy baby as that? He had all the love in the world from his mommy and daddy, yet he persisted with screaming cries and nothing was found really wrong with him. Unfortunately, my Lily did not stay long enough for him to see what a loving mother he had and my poor little boy missed out on the most important blessing that every child should receive.

Shortly after Michael was born, Laura started complaining of headaches and occasional blurred vision that she could not adequately describe. She kept insisting it was a sinus problem. She was examined and the doctors agreed it was her sinuses that were inflamed. Time went on and she was still keeping busy raising her children with so much love and devotion. More than anyone can imagine. Her entire being revolved around her two little gifts from heaven and her husband. We all shared the love of family and the sweetness of life, I had it all. My son, Steve, lived so far from us in a different state, and you can imagine when we all got together. Laura and I, along with little Julianne, used to go visit every few months and we'd stay for days at a time and all the cousins would be together and they all had such a close bond with one another. Her husband was so good to her and he mainly liked staying home and tinkering around with his hobbies and other things that he seldom had time to enjoy. What beautiful lives we had, so filled with everything, happy holidays and fun and lots of family gatherings.

By the time our little Michael was several months old, Laura was complaining more and more about this blurred vision, still maintaining it was being caused by sinus problems. Finally her doctor decided to send her to an Ophthalmologist. He found nothing wrong by looking into her eyes, but in time he was wise enough to refer her to a Neuro Ophthalmologist, who would do further examination into the cause of this problem. The Neuro Ophthalmologist was not pleased and decided to send her to a Neurosurgeon for yet further testing. Finally, they did an MRI. We were so sure that all would be well. After all, she was raising her children, although so very tired, but we attributed this to her exhaustion from lack of sleep. Plus the doctors all told us that whatever was wrong was certainly nothing to be unduly concerned about.

She finally went for the MRI. The results came the same day and they found a cyst on her Pituitary Gland, located in the brain and this is what controls every other gland in the body. Still the doctors told us not to worry; this was a simple matter and nothing to fear. She would dance at her grandchildren's weddings. My girl was so trusting and optimistic. We all placed great faith in the doctors. A great mistake. We should have known then that the only place where faith belongs is in God.

They scheduled her surgery and said there was no real hurry because it was going to be a very simple thing and she would be just fine within a matter of weeks, up and about and taking care of her children. I still remember that July of 2002, we were already making plans for our pumpkin picking in October, thinking that she would be totally well by then. We were so positive of this. In fact, we were so sure about everything that on July 13, 2002, Laura, her husband, the children and myself all took a week long vacation at Wildwood, New Jersey, and we had the best time we've ever had in our lives. As the week progressed I could see something was just not right. Laura was falling asleep in the middle of a sentence while speaking to us, she was almost totally blind by now, she was just so tired, beyond the normal. Part of me worried, but to think of anything bad was unthinkable, so we went our merry way still with hopes and dreams in our lives and looking forward to the days following her surgery, when she was promised to have her vision restored and back with her family to recuperate for a short time. She just couldn't wait. She had just about forgotten what it was like to see clearly without looking through a haze of blurriness. Why did I not notice? Why? Why didn't I know she was that sick? Did my mind shut down somehow and was I in some sort of denial where I could not see? I often think about this, not as much with guilt, although that is part of it, but more with bewilderment. How could I, her own mother, her own flesh and blood,

not have known? It was denial. Now I realize this. Something deep inside me knew what was to come and my mind shut down. I know that now.

The morning of July 23, 2002 at 5:00 a.m. in the morning, I had slept over the night before to take care of the two children, Julianne who was 5 and Michael who was 15 months. The last thing I saw that morning, while sleeping on the pull-out couch with her little Julianne in my arms, was the back of my Laura's head going down the steps of her house with her husband and I recall saying, "good luck sweetheart and don't worry, all will be well." Just like that, like she was going to have a tooth pulled out. I must have already been half insane from shock and didn't know it. Maybe my mind left me as protection to keep me alive. Whatever it was, I sure did not act in a normal manner, as a mother whose beloved and most precious child was going to have brain surgery. All that day I took care of the children and thought about her being in surgery, but still in a state in which the only way I can describe it, a numbness of some sort. The Lord was already preparing me. This just was not happening. Laura's nana came to the house, along with her cousin and her children, and all the children played that day, not realizing anything serious was happening, since they were so very young.

Late in the afternoon around 4:00 p.m., Laura's husband called with news from the hospital. Instead of the small benign cyst that they had originally diagnosed, it turned out to be a large tumor wrapped around her Pituitary Gland which did not show up in her tests. They had to remove the entire Pituitary Gland, which is the major gland in the body that controls just about every other gland. Once they did that, we never had our Laura back again. That was the last I spoke with the child of my heart that I once knew so well, that I loved from the moment she was born. Now she didn't know anyone anymore, she did not even know me. She hallucinated; she had to have a stomach tube inserted because she lost her swallowing reflex. Then the bigger problems began. She got blood clots in every organ of her body, her liver, her lungs, her kidneys, her legs, just about everywhere. She suffered stroke after stroke. The doctors still maintained that she would be perfectly fine and would be back to herself almost one hundred percent after a short recuperation time. She vomited continuously and then started having terrible seizures. More surgeries followed, a shunt was inserted in her brain to drain out the fluid, surgery to dissolve the clots in her lungs, and every opening of her body had a tube going into it. She was 33 years old.

God please help me to continue my story...

She stayed for two whole months in the ICU of a major University Hospital. They gave her excellent care and did all they could to make her comfortable and to reassure us that she would be well with time. Although I was upset, I still had such hope. After two months she showed a very slight improvement, but to my eyes, I did not see much. She still barely knew us. She didn't know me, her most beloved person on this earth, her mommy. Finally she was transferred to a rehabilitation center and they began rehabilitating her. She still did not look improved to me. She was like a young child again, holding a teddy bear, and she was so incoherent. Deep inside I knew all was not well. Maybe because we were one heart and one soul, connected by that invisible cord that connects mother and daughter that cannot be seen by the human eye, but that keeps us bound to each other. I knew. I knew this was not good. I was the only one who knew. My child, my Lily, my baby.

God please help me...

While in the rehabilitation center, her dad who had stayed by her side from the first day of surgery, right up until her stay at the rehabilitation center, was to a point of exhaustion from lack of sleep and complete weariness. He had to get some rest and sleep in a bed. The nurses promised to keep round-the-clock watch on her since she was a very difficult patient that had learned to remove her restraints and pull all her tubes out. They promised him and he trusted them. When he left, we later learned that the nurses left her alone and unattended. While she was alone in her room, she managed, with super human strength, to untie her restraints, and as far as we know, she climbed out of the bed and as was told to us, she fell on her head. Later on we learned she had fallen many times, which at that time we did not have knowledge of... That was her end. She slipped into a coma, had two more brain surgeries after this, one to remove the top portion of her skull, and also another to remove the hematoma that formed there. It was too late. The panel of doctors brought us all together and told us we had to make the decision to remove her from all her life support because there was no hope. I was in shock and numbness, just no way to describe what I felt. This was not happening. This could not be. I felt something inside of me die. Her dad and I refused to allow the tubes to be disconnected, we fought them and started praying over her, putting holy water from Lourdes and Fatima all over her body, putting relics of Padre Pio and pleading with God to bring her back to us. We wanted a great miracle. We had to have her back. This was absolutely not acceptable. There was just no way we were letting her go. She had to return to us. Her husband had the power of attorney and made the decision to remove the tubes keeping her alive. We had no say and

it was of no use anyway because there was no hope, but we refused to face this. They finally removed all her tubes and transferred her to Hospice care. I slept there for a week, never leaving. I had a bed there and sat by her side the entire time singing the beautiful Christian hymn "Be Not Afraid" into her ear in the hopes that she could hear me. I told her to take the hand of Jesus and go with him. My heart was like a bleeding wound, but little did I know that this was only the tip of the iceberg. The worst was yet to come.

On Saturday Morning, October 19, 2002, on the morning of her husband's 35th birthday, a husband she loved so much, I sat there holding her hand, watching her breathe her final breath on this earth and breathing them with her, feeling her death within me as I died along with her. Her face took on a translucent quality, her skin was like porcelain, her face had a sweetness to it such as I had never seen in life. She was so completely angelic looking and everyone that saw her also noticed this. I knew the exact moment when her last breath came. I stood there and saw with my very eyes that last and final breath as she crossed over from this earth beyond the veil into God's kingdom. At that moment I felt something inside leave me, maybe a piece of my spirit went with her, it's very difficult to explain, but I just felt something leave. In that moment my life was no more the life I had known. I became someone else. In that moment the world looked different to me. I saw through eyes that were no longer mine. A sweet soul that departed with angels carrying her right up to the loving presence of the Father in Heaven. She was a doll and an angel. A daughter among daughters. The very breath and life of me. I was left with a void so big and so large that nothing on this earth can fill it. A mother that has lost her own life. Our whole entire family was shattered and torn to pieces. All joy and happiness was taken from us. No more holiday celebrations, no more parties, no more laughter but only tears now, sometimes silent and sometimes not.

Four years have passed now and rather than recover, I'm only worse with time. My emptiness remains and I'm a shadow of who I used to be. The grandchildren that I loved from the day they were born had to begin a new life with their father and I am only permitted to have a very minimal relationship with them, and I'm not encouraged to get too close. My daughter's children. My own flesh and blood. Their hearts are broken over this as well as mine. All of our lives were taken from us, so my baby did not die alone because I, her mommy, went with her. Her daddy and her nanas went with her as well. We are a family no more. We are all relatives merely existing together and trying hard to just keep on going. A mother's heart cannot heal. They say it does but I just cannot even imagine such a thing. I don't even like the word 'heal' when it comes to a mother that has lost a

child. This word makes no sense to my mind. Yes, I will go on, but in what way? I will exist. I will continue to breathe as long as God wants me to, and I see the birds and the sunshine and the lovely flowers. What do they mean to me? Not very much. My child is gone. Most of my being is gone. I'm in a huge bubble watching the world move around me and it seems to be a world of unreality. When will I open my eyes one morning and discover that this was just a really bad dream? Every day when I wake up this is what my first thought is. It's not true, it was only a terrible dream I had.

Now my days are filled with helping other people when I can. I enjoy writing poetry and short stories. I've been blessed with special gifts from God that I would never have imagined. I was suddenly given this wonderful gift of graphic designing which I somehow learned in my own unique way. I never had one bit of talent in my life, other than writing poetry. I received this as an additional gift. I believe when a mother loses her child, in some strange way, unknown to us, our soul touches eternity and that is where we receive these gifts. The friends I once had, I still try to maintain a certain level of friendship, but in a new and different way. It cannot be as before. I've had to try to find new friends, ones that I am on common ground with, mainly other mothers like myself. We become an exclusive club. This club is one that horrifies anyone that hears of it and it is unimaginable to even consider ever becoming a member of it. The price of joining this club is just not affordable.

I have found the Lord. He draws near to those who are in sorrow and grief. He is there to hold us up, he has searched for a lost sheep and He found me. I walk with the Good Shepherd and I fear no evil for he is always with me. My spirit feels his gentle touch and the warmth of his love within me. He carries me when I cannot carry myself. He reassures me of his love and devotion to me and he promises me hope for a mansion of my own in His kingdom one day. This is what we must carry with us. The hope that the Lord has given us. I cannot even imagine how any mother or father can possibly get through losing their child in any other way. This has been my sorrowful walk. I go where my Savior leads me and I hear the sound of my Master's voice that forever calls me.

I will cry until the day I leave this earth. My heart is broken and shattered forever. I'm holding on tight to the Hand of the Lord as I climb that stairway up to heaven and find that which my heart seeks. When I take my final bow as I stand before the throne of the Lord, through His mercy, I will receive my crown of gold, and through his grace, my Lily will be waiting there for me to welcome me home.

Written by Ann Sorbara ©

In Loving Memory of My Lily

www.geocities.com/dadtochris3/laura1.html

I asked Ann what Laura's symbol would be:

Dinah,

Thank you so much for the reminder. How did I forget the most important thing of all. My Laura is "The Lily of Heaven." Since she was a little girl, I always called her Lily, a little nickname, and I can't remember ever calling her Laura, but always Lily. That's why I'm also known as Lily on my graphics. God bless you and thank you from my heart to your heart.

Hugs,



Ann----

Laura's symbol is a lily.

Skip & Jerry Mudge, have lost a total of three children. Jerry's two children, Wayne (8-19-62) and Leon Jonas, Jr. (2-17-61), were killed in an auto-truck accident, 10-26-90. Skip's son, Jeff (1-14-61), completed suicide, 10-24-87.

Some comments from a class we (Skip and Jerry) did a few weeks ago:

Some comments we received were: The comments are from a 9th grade class at Providence High on 9-22-06

Out of 37 students in the class, 11 stated on the evaluation that they already drink so we noted that on their answers below!

We do ask the kids to do an evaluation of our program and not sign it but one young lady wanted to.

COMMENTS

Your presentation did make an impact on me & my life. I will never again get into a car with a drunk driver. Thank you for your presentation. (drinks)

Thanks for touching me and thanks for telling us about your story. That helps me more when I see what happened and how it affected you. (drinks)

The presentation helped a lot and it touched me & I know others very much! (drinks)

You have shown me the real dangers of drinking. Thank you. (drinks)

Well, I think that you are really a great encouragement on young people. (drinks)

Thank you for coming in. I can relate to your sons because I am a car guy and I would never want that to happen. (drinks)

I love how open and sweet you are and how well you can hold yourself together while you talk about your sons and you 1st husband. (drinks)

Thank you so much for coming. You made start thinking about how my choices about drinking affect me and others

I am sorry for the loss of your sons. You have definitely made me never want to drink.

Thank you for coming. I'm very sorry for what happened to you. You'll make a big difference in many young people's lives. Continue what you're doing; you touched me and my classmates today.

This presentation helped with realizing what drinking, drinking & driving can do to you and others.

These movies really make me think about how I am not invincible and that any of this could happen to me.

It was more informative to know that you were affected than for some random person saying not to drink.

All the things in the presentation have affected me in a positive way. It made me really see that one driver can do so much to one family and person. It also made me see not to drink, no matter what, even just one drink. You both influenced me a ton, and I'm so sorry about your sons.

Thank you for coming in, I was very touched by your presentation because my old babysitter was killed by a drunk driver.

I am so sorry. I am glad that you are going around telling teens about your story. Keep doing what you're doing; it sure makes me think twice. Tell your daughter I said hello and good job.

Some people really suck. I'm sorry about your sons. You are such an inspiration. Thank you so much for coming. I would have never been able to do what you are doing.

As I listened to the story of Leon Jr. and Wayne, I was influenced not to drink. As I found out they were your kids, I was shocked. Your story really touched me and influenced me not to ever drink. Keep doing what you're doing because you're making a big difference.

You touch me because now I know not to drink or to ride with someone that drinks.

I will never drink and drive. If at some point I do have some alcohol, I won't drive, I'll get someone else to. I would never want to do that to somebody and I wouldn't want that to happen to me. I can't believe she was the mother; if that was me. I wouldn't be able to do that at all.

Thank y'all for what you are doing-we appreciate it. God bless you and your hard work. Tell Brandon that we appreciate his impact because of his story. I want to thank you for coming. I couldn't be able to stand up and present that like you do. I pray that God will bless you for it, like you've blessed so many others. Thank you for sharing with us and God bless you. Jenna Monk

Leon Jr. and Wayne's symbol is a rose. Jeff's symbol is a car.

Maggie St. Johns children, Judy (5-23-49) died as a result of complications of diabetes, 1-26-93; Jim, (9-18-59) died from an overdose of Heroin, 1-18-94; and Ed (1-11-52) died from bleeding after surgery.

Maggie shares a very special time:

Dinah,

That was a great newsletter. I do want to tell you what happened to me on my birthday.

I was beginning to feel down as I didn't have my 3 children with me anymore and my birthday was going to here soon.

On Friday night, 9/15, my brother called me to go to dinner at my niece's house. He came for me at 6:30 with my sister-in-law and nephew, and we went to the dinner.

There were many cars in front of the house, but I didn't think much about it. I went on the porch and opened the sliding door and there wasn't any table set up for dinner, but chairs and tables were around the living room. In the kitchen at the bar I looked up and there were so many people. My great grandsons, my granddaughters, my daughters-in-law, and all the family. My daughter-in-law, Meryl, came from Maine with my Amelia. That is about 3 1/2 hours away. I live in Mass.

They said "Surprise, this is for you!"

It was wonderful! I knew that my Judy, Jim and Ed were there. The energy and the joy around the room were so wonderful. They gave me a flat screen computer and there was so much food and cake.

I was overwhelmed and for days all I could think of was this party. My family embraced me with love and I knew they wanted me to know that they loved the 3 also. They showed it by this tribute.

*I am blessed,
Love, Maggie*

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

**Tom & Sissie Levi's son, Patrick (12-6-75) died,
3-6-96.**

Sissie shares her family's plan for the holiday:

Hi Dinah,

We are sharing our holidays with our new love, Journee Grace Le VI, our little adopted granddaughter from Guatemala. She is not a replacement, but a loving, joyful blessing from the good Lord above. We think of our Patrick often; every day something comes along that reminds us of him; ice cream, rainbows, half moons (which he used to say, "that looks like a fingernail). God is good! Hope your holidays are blessed!!!!

*Love,
Sissie Levi*

Patrick's symbol is an angel carrying a star.

**Mary Kane's daughter, Linda (11-28-68) was murdered,
9-25-91.**

Linda told of her latest loss:

Dear Dinah,

I want to thank you for all these years that you remember Linda on the date of her death and her birthday. I know it took me many years to thank you, so very much. Plus, I wanted to let you know my husband, Walt, passed away on January 7th of this year.

*Many thanks to you again,
Mary*

Linda's symbols are an angel and a unicorn.

**Mike & Debbie Campbell's daughter, Rachel (2-13-86) was
killed in an auto accident, 11/14/04.**

Hello Dinah,

I just love the stories about others' children too. I have been reluctant to write mine because I felt I was just not ready. But there are some things I would like to share.

My precious little girl, Rachel Anna Campbell, was only 18 years old when God called her home. That was on Nov. 14, 2006. She was and is a

beautiful, kindhearted young woman who was so giving of herself. And, oh, how she loves Jesus!! During High School, she would go out of her way to make the "new kid" feel welcome and was always helping in some activity. She loved to bake and would bake cookies or cupcakes or anything she found a recipe for and take it to school. She and her 2 best friends painted their faces 1/2 blue and 1/2 white for every soccer game played at their school. They never missed a home game. They called themselves the "soccer cheerleaders." Others started coming to the games just to cheer.

She had such wonderful friends, who I still keep in touch with. I take them to lunch, go shopping, just girl stuff. That is what Rachel and I LOVED to do. We would talk, shop and eat. Every time we went out, she would ask me to get her some chicken pieces-anywhere! When we went shopping, she really did not ask for anything, but I knew her favorite store was American Eagle. So, I would take her there and buy her something special. She loved their jeans and sweaters.

I never had to worry about Rachel because we always knew where she was and when she would be home--and stuck to it. If she was going to be a few minutes late, she always called. I could really trust her to do what she said she would. Her Christian values were better than mine. I feel like God REALLY blessed me with her short life here.

She was on her way to college (She had just started her first year) and a man in a truck hit her in her car door at such an impact, she was pushed into another stopped car on the other side of the highway. I later found out that he was at least traveling 55mph. He was crossing over her road and never stopped. He never took responsibility for his actions. He killed my baby. What wonderful things she could have done for God. I enclosed her last journal entry. I keep it with me always and cry every time I read it. Please pray for Mike and me as her angel date is on Nov. 14. I have more to share, but I will save that for another day. Thank you and May God Bless you.

Debbie Campbell

Her sign is a lady bug. She had lady bug stuff everywhere!

Rachel's last journal writing on March 15, 2004

"18 years is enough time to live with honor, enough time to make friends, enough time to earn the love and respect of all who know you well. 18 years is plenty of time to be of service to others, to be kind to those less fortunate, to set a good example and to keep your word....One lifetime is all you get but it is always enough if we use every day we are given.

I read in a magazine article about some kids that died at 18. When I read it, it was kind of like hello! Something clicked. I knew it before but this shone a whole new light on the topic that it's time to be mature. Not even just 18 year olds, or even 16 and 17, you're really old enough to do all those things: live with honor, earn respect, help those less fortunate, set a good example. It's time to stop saying tomorrow I'll grow up tomorrow, but there isn't necessarily a tomorrow. This just made me realize that I'm old enough to make a difference....everybody is."

Rachel's symbol is a lady bug.

Wes & Farrell Jean Washam's son, John Mark (10-28-73) was killed in an auto accident, 5-20-90.

Farrell shared:

Your expression of where Jim is in your life was very well stated...much of what I feel and experience.

...Think the gift I've taken the most from John Mark's death is to savor life daily...rarely do people, situations, or words upset us...We know those are but feathers floating to the ground...We've experienced the ton of bricks dumped on our head!...

Life is going well for us. Our daughter, Jamie, 30, continues to live in Milwaukee... We run about 20 head of black Angus cows...have 11 calves and waiting on 6 more.

Our church, Robert Lee Baptist, has just called a new pastor, and everyone is feeling God's working in our church...so life in rural Texas is good...

John Mark's symbol is a dove.

Carolyn Bethea's daughter, Trissie Fetter (9-30-65) died in an auto accident, 9-24-03.

Carolyn shared several of her Trissie stories:

I would love to be able to say I have gotten as far along as you, but sadly I have not-although I have come a long way. I would like to share some of the things that happened after my daughter, Trissie, died. She passed in an automobile accident in Canada where she lived, and of course we went up there for the funeral. We were flying back home on Tues. Sept. 30th, which by the way was her birthday, and her husband brought us an alarm clock that ran on batteries so we would be able to get up the next morning. He said "Oh my, this clock has stopped on 1:00. This is funny because our other clock stopped at 1:00 the day Trissie wrecked."

When we got home, I have a 30 day wind up clock that I had wound up on Sun. Sept. 21st and it was now only Sept 30th. When we got home the next morning I looked at the clock and it had stopped at 1:00. Also the Tuesday night we got home Sept. 30th, my husband and I went to bed with the TV on a timer and it went off because I was awake when it went off. I had finally dozed and my husband woke me up going to the bathroom and the TV came back on all by itself. My husband asked me why I turned it on and I told him I didn't, I thought he did. The remote was lying on the dresser beside the bed so I know we hadn't accidentally hit it.

A month or so later, we brought a TV that we had at his mother's and replaced the one in our bedroom. Guess what! A few nights later that one came on also. I don't understand what happened, but I definitely felt like it was Trissie.

A few weeks later at 9:34 pm, I was in bed and my phone rang once. So the next morning I looked at the caller id and saw it was my baby daughter's number in Georgia, so I called her and asked why she had called-once again here it comes-she said "Mama I didn't call you." I told her about the phone ringing and the caller id and she said "Mama I was talking to Wendy (My oldest child) so it couldn't have been me. She then proceeded to tell me that she had just lost it and called Wendy because she didn't want to worry me and at that time Wendy was making plans to drive to Georgia to get her. Then she said "Mama it had to be Trissie's letting you know something was wrong." That morning when I got to work my oldest daughter Wendy called me and said "Mama what time was on the caller id?" and I said 9:34 pm, she then told me the same story Angie told and said "Mama I know that wasn't Angie, because Tommy (Wendy's husband) said you had better call your mama and I looked at the clock and it said 9:34. So mama I know it wasn't Angie.

I don't tell people this stuff because they think I have lost it. Thank you so much for listening.

Love and hugs Carolyn, Trissie's Mom

<http://www.trissiefetter.com/>

I asked Carolyn if I could use her email:

My Dear Dinah,

You most definitely can use the story. Any time I share anything with you and you feel it will help someone else you have my permission to use it. I thank God for you coming into my life, you have certainly been a blessing to me. When a mother comes along that I connect with, I just get this warm feeling that Trissie has met another friend (in heaven) and they decide to get their mothers together because they can help each other. And that is the way I feel about you and Jim. If there is anything I can ever do for you, just let me know. Love and Hugs, Carolyn

Trissie's symbol is a unicorn.

Teresa Cossey's son, Curren (12-6-81) was probably given drugs; he went to sleep and never woke up, 8-29-04.

Teresa shares what she does at the holidays:

Thanks again for the letter; it helps so much. The holidays are very hard for me; especially since Curren's birthday was the 6th of December. In 2004 I lost Curren in August and my father in December. I have tried to keep the holidays as normal as possible, for my mother, if nothing else. Curren's girlfriend (well was) comes over for Christmas dinner and Christmas Eve. I buy her gifts and I give Curren's birthday money to a charity.

I try to go away to my lake place as much as possible. Curren enjoyed it there so much- the boating, fishing, wake boarding. Like I said, to describe him is "full speed ahead."

I tried to make it to a TCF meeting, but wasn't for sure where it was located and knew I didn't have the strength to ask the folks in the lobby where it was. I will give them a call next month and see if I can get a room number or something. I really would like to meet others around here in my situation.

Thanks again for all of the help you and Rosemary have given me- and I'm sure countless others. Who would have ever thought that it would be the new purpose in our lives; to help others who have lost children. I guess we have that, whereas others have graduations, marriages, grandchildren, etc. to focus on.

*As always,
Teresa*

Curren's symbol is a purple bear.

**Larry & Karen Cantrell's son, Jacob Hutcheson (11-10-85)
was killed in an accidental shooting, 10/25/02.**

Karen is the group leader of the Compassionate Friends in Frankfort.

My Dearest Dinah,

I just returned from our Frankfort Compassionate Friends meeting and I wanted you to know Jim continues to help others through you. I guess you already know that 😊 At our meeting tonight, J.I.M.'s conference came up in conversation and continued to come up during the course of the evening. We had a new family join us this evening and as always the conversation got around to what has helped us in our grief journey and J.I.M.'s conference is always top on the list. Angela Wilkens brought your beautiful picture of you in your red car and we passed it around and what an encouragement you are to so many. We expressed to all newly bereaved, that you didn't get there in that car with your beautiful smile over night after your son died. You got to where you are today, through much hard work and allowing yourself to reinvest in life. We shared the many scholarships in Jim's memory that you have been able to help so many young ones with, along with the Christmas Box Angel and the beautiful Dome at the Cumberland Inn and Fine Arts Center...of course, you can't mention your name without mentioning Jim Sr., Rosemary and Luther and the wonderful things they have done in Jeremiah and Drew's names.

So...if your ears were burning, as the old adage goes, you had good reason to think so :) love you dearly Dinah,

*Karen Cantrell
Jacob's Mom*

Jacob's symbol is a 4-wheeler.

Carl & Barbi Kinne's son, Joe Frank (10-30-77) completed suicide, 7-17-01.

Barbi has a wonderful idea to do in memory of her son on his birthday:

Dinah,

So good to hear from you. You always want to hear our stories and I am always so ready to tell them.

Joe Frank's birthday is the 30 of this month, (but then you already know that) (you keep up with all our kids). For his birthday this year, I am going to give a gift. I have bought a package of socks, a really big package of gloves, a hat, a rain jacket, beef jerkey sticks, and a flashlight with extra batteries, and a hooded poncho. I got some of those heat packages that hunters use. These are bigger than the hand warmers they are big enough for the entire body. There are 4 in the pack and they stay warm for eighteen hours!! I also bought a pack of cigarettes. I am putting it all into a black leather carry bag with a note in it with a picture of Joe Frank's smiling face printed on it. I am going to tell him that my son died and this gift I am giving him is because my heart needs to celebrate his life.

I think he "lives" in the tobacco warehouse here in town. I don't know why he is homeless. But I know how it feels to be lonely, and I have family. Ya know I have seen him for years and always turned my head the other way. Something in me has changed. It has changed in Carl and Adam too.

I don't know how he will accept my package. I plan to shake his hand and smile. After Joe Frank died, for some reason I wanted to be homeless and I told Carl that's what I wanted. I didn't want to live in a house and have things and eat regularly. I didn't want anything since I didn't have Joe Frank anymore. Maybe that is why this man is homeless, maybe he lost someone he loved and just gave up.

Of course, my son Adam and husband Carl looked at me with raised eyebrows because that is so out of the ordinary for me. Everything is out of the ordinary for me now that I live life without Joe Frank in it. I guess I really didn't care much before about a lot of things. Doing this for this man has made me feel happiness in my heart.

Dinah--- I am enrolled in SCHOOL. I always wanted to go after my boys left home, I just hadn't planned for it to be like this. I am majoring in

Psychology... I feel so good about it. It makes me feel proud of myself. I hope in time to be a grief counselor. And the great thing about this is that my work is paying my full tuition. (As long as I keep a B average, if not I have to reimburse them for that semester) They are paying because that is a position that the company can benefit from by me possibly moving into. Also, it gives me something to do with me, keeps me on track; I have an obligation to keep me focused.

My grandson is now 2. He is my world. I tell him about Joe Frank. He can now say his name. He looks at his picture and says "angel" The sad thing is that his Mom was driving past the cemetery with him and he pointed to it and said, "Joe Frank." Oh, how it shouldn't have to be like that. Also, the other day an old friend of Adam's, who had moved away after graduation was in town. Adam saw him and he asked, "How's Joe Frank doing?" I know that broke Adam's heart. It hurt me so deeply and I started imagining what all Adam would have said if Joe Frank were still here. The first thing that he would have said I know is "He's fine." Oh God. All that pain smacks you in the face again.

Dinah, I have thought about this a lot and I am going to run it by you... Why don't you publish all the newsletters into a book (or several books) Everything is already written down. I think everyone of us parents would buy it. You could put the money to some kind of good use,, start your own charity... name the book "Jim's Friends," scatter pictures of all the kids all over the cover.. You can sell it at Amazon and everywhere. Most of the work is already done. I am sure you would have everyone's permission to use their submissions. You have mine. Your work has touched so many people, but in doing this book thing you could spread the message world wide. We can never have too many Dinahs in the world... Please- Please think about this. Why wouldn't it work? Where are all the newsletters and e-mails and stories going to go? If something happens to you, it will all be lost, just another memory. PUBLISH THEM, in honor of all our children...

(Let me go on record, I don't have the time for this project)

Joe Frank's symbol is "I Love You" hand sign for the deaf.

Jim and Helen Marie Murphy's son, Jimmy (2-12-71) died in the attack on the World Trade Center, 9-11-01.

We have lost a fellow traveler, Helen Marie. I received this note from her daughter, Kathleen:

Dear Dinah,

Are you the "Butterfly Lady"?

Thank you so much for the card to mom this September 11th. I'm sorry to tell you that my mom passed away May 4, 2006.

It's been a tough 5 years since my brother, Jimmy was killed, but this year was particularly difficult. My mom's oldest brother, who had suffered from Parkinson's for the past 7 years began to fail. Uncle John was my mom's rock. There for her at the worst moments of her life. He passed away February 9th.

After that, Mom spent the previous few weeks getting further tests for some concerns of the doctor. Uncle John was buried 2/11/06, Jimmy's birthday was February 12th (he would have been 35), and Mom was diagnosed with lung cancer February 13th. The news went from bad to worse with the cancer having spread to her brain.

She finished daily radiation for the brain tumors on March 13th. On the 18th, she collapsed and wound up at Sloane Kettering. Her team of doctors had treated Peter Jennings and Dana Reeves, but they couldn't help. She never came home and passed away 2:30 pm on Thursday, May 6th. Just the opposite of Jimmy, we had time to say good-bye and anything not said, I know Mom can hear what's in our hearts now.

All summer I have had butterflies around me-even landing on me and resting. Amazing!

Sincerely,

Kathleen

I asked Kathleen if I could share Helen Marie's eulogy with fellow travelers so we would know her, and this was her reply:

Dinah - My pleasure! Sharing the eulogy is a great way to share mom. I've included the eulogy in this email - and hope to write you again when I have more time. Hope all is well and yes - I do know who you are! My mother did always enjoy your notes! Thank you!

Kathleen

HELEN MARIE MURPHY

I feel compelled to open with a fairly recent memory of my mother. About six months ago, before Mom was sick, she came home from a friend's funeral, very moved by what this man's family had to say about him. There were a couple of us sitting around the table and she announced, "I think I am going to have to write my own eulogy." "Why?" we asked. "Well, I want to make sure you say nice things about me." We suggested that she could be nice to us and actually earn a good eulogy. Without hesitating, she responded, "No – too risky."

Well, Mom did not write her own eulogy ... she lived it. As Dad has often remarked over the years, "Everybody loves your mother." She was warm... welcoming...genuine. People were truly drawn to her, and were compelled to share with her the stories of their lives. All of us knew it was risky going out in public with Mom. No matter where you went with Mom, she would run into someone she knew, or even someone she didn't know, and there would be a "conversation." It was never a quick conversation, like "how's the weather?" or other standard social chit-chat. These were engaged, meaningful ... and long...conversations. The downside for us was that a trip to get a quart of milk often took over an hour.

Quite simply, Mom made people feel comfortable. She was interested in who YOU were, and what YOUR story was. One of her talents was that she genuinely accepted people for who they were. It didn't matter that you weren't perfect -- she was never interested in pretending that she was perfect. Her sincerity and her honesty were like a magnet. People were so honest and forthcoming with her because she was honest with herself.

Many of you know where Mom most loved to spend her time. She loved some quiet time with a book ... she loved to shop ... she loved having meals out with friends. But those who knew her best know where she truly loved spending her time -- at the kitchen table. It was there, as Dad would say, she "held court." At almost any time day or night, one could come in the back door at my parents' home (which everyone used as a front door) and find Mom, most likely with a freshly brewed pot of coffee ... or a Diet Coke. Everyone was welcome at our family table.

It was at that table that Mom would do her best work. The soul of our family life was created at that table by Mom, and that was where she shared it with our friends and extended family and their friends. There she instigated lively discussions on politics, religion or current social issues. The table was where, by example, she instilled in all of us the importance of family and communication. And ... that was where she shared her incredible sense of humor. Time spent at that table with Mom inevitably

included laughter, and under her skilled example, one-liners would fly at rapid pace. It was around that table that we celebrated life's great events, like birthdays and holidays, or the most mundane, like coffee and the paper on a Monday morning. And the table was where Mom's hospitality shined, and where she welcomed all of our friends and provided them a place to laugh and share. My husband likes to say that we were dating for 2 years before he ever knew there was a room in the house other than the kitchen.

It seemed that once someone experienced Mom and the kitchen table, they wanted to come back. Over this past summer, 2 college friends of mine were in from out of town, and we got together for dinner out here. After dinner, I asked my friends what they felt like doing, and they said, "Honestly, we would love to go see your mother." I responded, "You are kidding me. We are out together for the first time in a year, we have no kids or husbands to worry about, and you want to go to my parent's house??" They pressed on. "We loved hanging out with your Mom at the kitchen table, talking and laughing for hours. Any chance your parents are still awake??" It was only 10:30, so of course they were -- and off we went. I think we finally left at 1 am.

There is no doubt that Mom learned the importance of family and human relationships from her own family. Growing up, I often heard stories from Mom about the friends and family who visited the Fagan household, and the stories themselves reflected a contagious warmth and spirit. It was a fitting tribute to her father -- whom she so adored -- that Mom died on May 4th -- the 40th anniversary of his death.

Lest you think I want to canonize her, I will tell you that we don't really have many memories of playing Candyland and other games with Mom. But she was always a beacon in our lives -- a strong, steady light to guide us along our way. She taught us to treat all people with respect, from the teen pouring coffee at Dunkin' Donuts to the wife of Anwar Sadat. She had a strong sense of right and wrong, and had no tolerance for people who were phony or put on airs. And she did not shrink from telling you exactly what she thought. You knew the discussion was over when she said, "Listen to me, I am your mother, if I don't tell you, who will?"

Mom possessed an incredible, innate knowledge of human nature. This gave her an uncanny ability to guide us through the dilemmas of whether the "uncool" kids should be invited to a 4th grade birthday party, to how to choose our friends. You were wise to take her advice, not because she would chastise you ... or be angry, ...but simply because, most times, she was right.

Mom faced the hardships of life with strength, humility and grace. She understood and taught us that life was sometimes difficult. What made the difference was your reaction to life's challenges. She evolved and gained wisdom through her life experiences, yet retained a strong hold of her basic values and who she was. Even these past few weeks when she was so sick ... and knew she was dying, she showed courage and grace. She was accepting, and trusting in her faith. Her bright personality was not dimmed. She was still funny, as she rolled her eyes when the neurologist asked her, for the tenth time, "How many fingers am I holding up?" ... She was still warm. She treated the hospital staff with the same respect she showed everyone in her life. She would look at them with kindness and appreciation, and many remarked that she was their favorite patient. When Dr. Brescia, the head of Calvary Hospital came to visit Mom, he shared with Dad that she was a "special woman" ... he felt honored to have met her.

I am sure many of you have funny stories about Mom. She had a quick wit and a wonderful ability to tell a story and to laugh at herself. She was more than funny, she was fun-loving.... My sisters and I, including Jeanine, will always relish the memories of the girls' trips we took each year for the last five years. From California, to Arizona to Puerto Rico, Mom was full of spunk, enthusiasm and, of course, a lot of laughs. Some of you might think that traveling with your mothers might be a drag, but not our Mom. She went along with the flow, with her typical easy-going style and grace. I'm sure I will never forget the laughs we had teaching Mom how to cue up on the pool table at 12 midnight at the El Conquistador. I don't know about the rest of us, but Mom, I know, was sober.

Mom shared her love for life with her grandchildren, or the "mice," as she liked to say. Mimi, as they called her, reveled in the events of their lives, from birthdays -- communions --- Halloween parades at school. We laughed as she took turns pulling each one aside -- she would stoop down low -- and whisper "YOU'RE the best one." Whenever she and Dad took a trip, Mimi always returned with gifts for the mice. Forever the teacher, she consistently shared her faith and love of God with them. The mice have shelves of children's prayer books and bible stories from Mimi... She shared her sense of humor and spirit with them. On one of Mimi and Pop's trips to visit Liz, Dan and the girls in California, Mimi was wearing ... leopard-print pants. Emily remarked ... "Mimi, I didn't know grandmas could wear pants like that!" ... Mom's quick response, "Well, Emily, your grandma is a swinger!"

Discussing Mom's experience as a mother would be incomplete without mentioning our brother Jimmy. Those closest to Mom know that she

was never really the same after he died. As the months after 9/11 passed, we began to realize that we also lost a part of her that day. She was still present ... still interested, yet she lost some of her sparkle. Her faith provided her much comfort, knowing that she would one day be with him again. Throughout the past four and ½ years, her faith served not just as an example, but a source of strength for all of us.

One cannot talk about Mom without talking about Dad and what they made together. As one of Mom's friends said to me recently, in asking how Dad was holding up, "If ever a man loved a woman, Jim loved Helen Marie." ... She was his Goddess. ... But not enough is said about how much Mom loved Dad. These past weeks in the hospital, Mom was very weak, but when Dad walked into the room -- she lit up like a schoolgirl... In these past few days, we found the booklet from their wedding day. The pamphlet opened with advice for the bride and groom. In one part it states: "The chief characteristic of true love is respect for the personality of the beloved." Mom and Dad had that respect for ... and pride in... each other's own personalities and their differences.

Mom truly was a remarkable woman. I would often tell her that she should have been a psychologist ...but I have realized that though Mom did not have a formal employer in over forty years, she made a widespread impact on peoples' lives and left a great legacy that no salary could reflect. By her sincere interest... acceptance... and love for the many and varied people in her life, Mom consistently and simply lived the faith she held so dear. And now ... I have an image of Mom...at a great big kitchen table... with Jimmy... and Uncle John... and her parents, enjoying a freshly brewed pot of coffee.

Diane Craddock's son, JJ Wade (9-22-72), died from carbon monoxide, 1-26-05, and her daughter, Michele Wade (12-31-76), died in an auto accident, 5-20-04 (the same angel date as Young Jim).

Diane wants everyone that is interested to be involved in this:

I'm getting things together for the second annual Celebration of Life event to be held on December 31, 2006, at 3 pm in Franklin, Virginia. This ceremony is held in memory of loved ones from around the world and

to celebrate the lives they lived. The precious memories of their lives are blessed gifts, whether here briefly or a long time, will never be forgotten.

The ceremony consists of guest speakers, continuous overhead slide presentation with pictures and dates of the loved ones, pictures and tributes placed on tables where candles are lit in their honor and memory, release balloons, and share fellowship over light refreshments. For families that live too far away to attend the event in person....their loved ones picture and tribute (tribute is written by the person wanting their loved one included...as long or short as you want) is given the same loving care and presentation as the attending families.

If anyone would like to include a loved one (child, parent, sibling, spouse, friend, etc) contact me by December 15th (the picture and tribute can be sent snail mail or email...if sending snail mail send ASAP to PO Box 154 Carrsville, VA 23315). I add the names to the website after I receive the following information:

First and last name of deceased; their birthday and angel day; the state they lived in (files are categorized by state); name and address of the person submitting the loved one; and let me know if you want them included each year.

Check out the website <http://www.angels-arms.celebration-of.com> for last year's event and this is where the new names will be listed. If further information is needed, give me a call (757-562-1476 or 757-438-7812), email angelsarms2004@verizon.net

Diane Craddock, Mom of Angels JJ and Michele

JJ's symbols are a Harley and a boy angel. Michele's symbols are a Harley and a girl angel.

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

Karen is feeling the heart-break of the holidays:

Dearest Dinah:

I talk of my Geoff all the time. He was and is a great part of my life. I do things in memory of him. I find that after 4 years, dear friend, I am sadder than ever and try hard not to think of the rest of my life without him -

it's too painful to think. At one time, I knew that even though my younger years were fraught with pain; I figured I would have a wonderful time in my older years because of Geoff and the woman he would marry and the children he would have. Now, I can't bear to think of those things because I won't have them.

I try to keep busy: I teach CCD (Roman Catholic religious education) for 7th graders; I still am the Secretary of the Boy Scout Troop Geoff belonged to; I am a Eucharistic Minister at St. Agnes; I am still teaching full time; we belong to the Middletown Alliance for Substance Abuse and I am the Vice Chairperson; I pray to God a lot and ask Him to guide me and heal my heart a little. I get a lot of satisfaction from my religious part of my life. Sometimes, even that, makes my heart ache because Geoff received First Communion and was Confirmed at St. Agnes, as well as buried from there.

I wish things would get a little "softer" - I just find it hard to be a happy person these days. It's been hellish the last couple of months. I am in the "down" phase of grieving. I know it will get a little better but with the holidays it becomes so melancholic and painful.

Work is hard on me physically and retirement seems to be what I need. I do want to continue teaching, but in a different environment; somewhere where I am appreciated and not disrespected. I find it hard and mean to have to make a young person who is 4 years below grade level take a state mandated test called the Grade 8 Proficiency Assessment and then be told they must pass the test!! It seems to me that it is intolerable to make a youngster who already knows he is below level take a test and be told he must pass it even though he is in Special Education and may not be able to ever pass the test. My kids, last year, got 163 to 190 and proficient is 200 - our school has been told by the state that it must count our Special Ed Students in the regular education population. I am floored and disgusted by that kind of attitude. Yet, these kids worked so hard to make it as far as they have.

My memories of Geoff are wonderful and yet they stop at the age of 18 - how unbearable and unfair and unjust that is. I know life is not fair - it's just that having Geoff made it bearable and I could laugh at the world and its foibles and foolishness. I can't laugh like that anymore. I guess I am just tired.

God bless you dear friend. May He grant to you some peace of mind and heart.

Geoff's symbol is an angel with pink wings.

Ron and Sandra Grubbs' son, Jon (12-8-66), died from heart failure, 9-3-04.

Sandra shares Jon and God's amazing grace:

God's Amazing Grace

We were headed to Hilton Head Island for the vacation that we almost canceled. It was a gift from our son, Jon, and his wife, Gina.

Jon died very unexpectedly on September 3rd. He had run five miles that morning before he and his workmates headed home after a business trip in Cincinnati. He was not the driver because he was to drive part of the way to Hilton Head that night, where he and his wife, Gina, as they anticipated the birth of their first child, were going for a vacation. They had been married thirteen years and were excited about their daughter who would be born in two months.

But God had other plans. Instead of going to the beach, Jon went to heaven in an instant that night. When they realized that something was terribly wrong, his workmates were able to get him to a hospital that was three miles away. The staff of the ER told us later that he never knew a thing when he died. In the midst of the terrible shock and grief, we knew that in that instant, he was absent from the body and at home with the Lord.

Jon loved life, his friends, his family and his Lord passionately. He and Gina were active in their church. They sang duets together in the choir. He was not ashamed of the gospel and walked in God's amazing grace. More than 750 people came to the visitation and funeral. His pastor would tell of the joy that he brought to so many in his 37 years. He spoke of the fact that Jon had made preparation and was ready to meet his Lord.

Gina kept insisting that we should go on to the place both of our families enjoyed so much. A year before we had gone to Hilton Head at the same time as her parents, Roger and Joy. They loved Jon as if he was their very own son and we loved Gina as if she were our very own daughter. We had so much fun together. Not only were we friends, our hearts were joined by our faith in Christ.

So we went to Hilton Head less than a month after Jon's death under a cloud of grief. When we arrived, there had been a mix up in our reservations. We ended up staying in the condo that Gina's parents were staying in the night Jon died. We unpacked and went to eat at a favorite restaurant. It was bittersweet to be there. We watched a table of six couples

were laughing and having such a good time beside us. They got up to leave and I realized that one of the women had on a Community Bible Study double fish necklace.

My husband, Ron, encouraged me to stand up and introduce myself to her. He is so supportive of me as I serve in the role of Area Director. I stopped her as she and her friends were heading for the door. She told me that not only was she a member of Community Bible Study; all five of the other women were, too.

She asked me where we were staying and I told her. She asked me if I knew who owned my condo as two of the people in their group owned condos in that complex. When I told her the name, she said, "Gary and Julie are with us. You need to meet them." Julie began to tell me of the couple who had been staying in their condo that had to leave the day they arrived because their son-in-law died suddenly. She said that their Sunday school class and their Community Bible Study class had been praying for them.

At that point, I told her that it was our son who had died and introduced her to Ron. She stopped everyone in their tracks and told them that we were the family they had all been praying for. Those women and their husbands gathered around us in that restaurant and wept with us and comforted us.

All of us knew that we had experienced at divine appointment in that little restaurant. What an example it was of God's amazing grace.

After we got home that night, we called our daughter-in-law. We told her the wonderful story of God's amazing grace in the midst of our sorrow. She was so touched and responded by saying, "Now you all know that God meant for you to go to Hilton Head."

Our new friends insisted that we join their Sunday school class the following night for a Low Country Boil dinner. Before the blessing, the woman I met first, Candy, had written her story about God's amazing grace. As she put on her Community Bible Study necklace the morning we met, she asked God to let her be a special blessing to someone that day. What an incredible answer God gave her to that prayer.

They invited us to come to Sunday school and church with them. They were amazed that we had known their pastor since he was a boy. He had grown up in Bristol, TN where we live. We joined them for lunch after church at another restaurant that was a favorite of Jon and Gina's. They had no idea when they chose it that we had gone there the year before.

We stayed an extra day so I could go to the Hilton Head Island Community Bible Study class. It is a coed class that meets in their church.

Ron joined me for the lecture time. All of those ladies hugged us goodbye and promised to continue to pray for us and our two other sons, Lee and Gerald, and their families. They promised to continue to pray for Gina's parents, and her brother, Skip, as well as Gina and our unborn granddaughter.

Emmaline Rose Jonathan Grubbs was born on October 28. The nurse that attended Gina had a husband, John, who knew Jon in college. The doctor that delivered Emma was one of eleven in the practice. She told Gina that her husband had died two weeks before her baby was born eighteen years earlier. Again we saw God's amazing grace.

Gina added Jon's name to Emma's so she would always have a part of him with her. She has his dimple in her chin and his color of hair. It is our prayer that she will know the love of her heavenly Father in the same way as her parents and her grandparents.

All of us have all been kept in these difficult days by the prayers of the saints and God's amazing grace. Community Bible Study friends have been such a part of the story of that grace.

Darraugh Butler's son, Brandon (10-21-84), was murdered, 4-11-03.

Darraugh tells us how they celebrated Brandon's birthday:

October 21st, 2006

Saturday around 4:30 p.m. we went to Brandon's gravesite at Oak Hill Cemetery in Cincinnati, Ohio. It was very windy and I recalled that most of the time we visited his grave it would be windy. On this visit it was I, my sister, Theodora, my son John, daughter-in-law Erika, with grandchildren Shyde, Charles (Pooman), Shyheim, Erika's sister Kelly and Brandon's son, Damoni. We placed a beautiful bouquet of orange, yellow and red flowers on his grave. The flowers had been sent to Cincinnati from Georgia by Tarykka and my granddaughter, Cianna Brandynn. Cianna is named after her Uncle Brandon. His nephews each laid one of their neopets, a puppy and a tiger on his headstone. His niece, Shyde left some Cincinnati Bengal beads she had made. We told Damoni that his dad was there but I guess his 3-year-old mind didn't realize what we meant. He kept looking around as if Brandon were going to walk up to meet us. We stayed and reflected on Brandon. I thought of his smile and his beautiful hazel eyes

which had so much intensity and meaning to them. He often would ask me to look in his left pupil as a part of it was green in color and he liked pointing that out. At some point, my son, John kissed Brandon's gravestone and Damoni imitating him, bent down and kissed it too. We spent time writing messages from most of the family on about a dozen differently colored balloons. We also had one huge Happy Birthday Mylar balloon. Mary's balloon was red in color and when they were all released, hers got caught in a tree. We were sorry that her balloon would get left behind. However, after about 2 minutes it shook loose and after what seemed like forever, made it to where the rest were and it nestled by Damoni's balloon. After they got so far away they stayed fixed in what looked like a constellation for quite sometime and a couple of them would blink like stars. It was awesome! We gazed at them for as long as we could. It was quite some time before they disappeared from our view. During this time at the grave, we played a demo of rap music that Brandon had made. Damoni sung along when it played the one song titled "I'm A Beast", and Pooman joined in. I also had put an article with Brandon's picture in the "In Memoriam" section of the Cincinnati Enquirer and Post that ran on his birthday. Brandon was truly loved and is truly missed.

*Darraugh Butler,
Brandon's mom*

Brandon's symbol is a red cardinal.

Shannon Reid's son, Bryan (8-24-84), was killed in an auto accident, 6-24-00.

Shannon received comfort from seeing the dome at the Cumberland Inn:

I lost my son Bryan Jay Reid, exactly 2 months before his 16th Bday. Our symbol is a football for the gold Nike football charm he always wore, that I now wear daily. Ken, the funeral director put the chain around my neck after the funeral and I have worn it since. I now have the 'figero' chain he would have liked to have had, and would have gotten for his birthday that year.

I got the opportunity to meet Rosemary Smith and Dinah when they came to speak in Columbus, OH later that year. I was so filled with grief for them, but calmness came into me that I hadn't felt before. I'm so proud of all their efforts and causes. I owe Dinah a letter also, and will forward this to her too.

Last year on the way to Myrtle Beach we took a different route, this time going through Williamsburg. I am just in awe of The Dome!! Again, I felt the calmness come over me. It really isn't a "so, Bryan isn't the only one" feeling, it's the very idea that Jim, Rosemary and others made The Dome a priority, now a safe haven for us, the parents, families, and friends.

I have been running things thru my mind since I first heard of your HeartNotes, not sure what to write, and realize it's time to step it up! If you are going to compile these, the very least I can do is send you one! I think what you are doing is an excellent tribute to our angels!

I am filled with the regrets that I will never see Bryan as an adult, see him graduate, go to college, marry, and have children. I will never be a 'natural' grandmother, though all of his friends that have children share them with me. What blessings they all are!

Bryan's symbol is a football.



Fellow Travelers share laughter, tears and lots of chocolate.

There are two food groups: Chocolate and fruit. And if it is fruit, it should be dipped in chocolate.

My email address is: dinah@ucumberland.edu

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