
LAMENTATIONS

Issue 114

middle

August, 2007

July 26th was Young Jim's 35th birthday, but he will always be 18 to us. I haven't told any "Jim Stories" in a while, but my husband has been writing his autobiography and I would like to include some of his stories about Jim.

We were in front of our church one morning, Jim was probably 3 years old, and Bill Rose, a lawyer, asked young Jim: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Jim replied: "I want to become a cwoked (crooked) lawyer just like you." At first Bill Rose was shocked, but then he laughed as hard as I have ever seen him laughed, picked up young Jim, hugged him, and said: "This boy is going far in this world." From then on young Jim was Bill Rose's greatest friend. Indeed, Bill Rose made a special trip to Knoxville to find young Jim the Star Wars characters he wanted for Christmas. Bill carried a picture of Jim until the day Bill died.

When young Jim was in about the First grade, we attended a live play about the frontier of Kentucky at Fort Harrodsburg, Kentucky, entitled The Legend of Daniel Boone. We were there to watch the play conducted by a professor of play production at Cumberland College, named Michael Y. Walters, my old debate partner when we where both undergraduate students at Cumberland. In the summers he directed the play at Fort Harrod. In the play, a former star in the FBI televison production was playing the chief of the Indians. After the play, my wife Dinah and I took young Jim to meet the actors. When he met the Chief, young Jim said, "I know the Chief of all the Indians." The Chief asked "Who is he?" Jim said "Chuck Dupier" (a professor at Cumberland and a dear friend). The famous Indian asked who told him Chuck was chief of all the Indians and Jim said, "Chuck!"

One Sunday morning, there was a baptismal service at our church, during which time young Waldo, a friend of Jim's was being baptized. He

pointed to the preacher and said to me “I don’t like him.” I said, “Why?” Jim said: “Because he’s trying to drown Waldo.”

Once in church, when the pastor was going on and on, young Jim poked my side with his elbow and said, “Is he getting paid for that?” I said, “Yes.” At which time Jim winked at me. I whispered, “No, it’s not what you think,” but upon reflection of what eventually transpired, perhaps Jim had been unusually perceptive at a very young age.

Once, while in California, we went to an Asian Restaurant and Jim (6 years old) said he would order for us. When the waiter came he said something like “Chimmy chong, chong, chimmy chong, chong,” etc. Soon we told young Jim the waiter didn’t understand and we ordered in English.

Jim always loved good food. In fact, when he was about 7 or 8, we took him to New York City to The Yacht Club. When the waiter came to take our order, Jim ordered blue point oysters on the half-shell. The waiter asked me if young Jim knew what he was ordering and I said “yes.” The waiter said, “Most kids want a hamburger and French fries.” I said “No, he knows exactly what he is ordering.” Jim and I even enjoyed a cigar each in the “Men’s only” smoking room at the Yacht Club.

When Jim was 7, we lived across the street from Dinah’s brother, Ralph. Lee was Ralph’s son and almost two years younger than Jim. One day Lee got a pup and had named the pup Colonel. Obviously we had to get a pup and Jim named the pup Sergeant. Soon Jim swung open the door and asked: “Dad, a sergeant outranks a Colonel, doesn’t he?” I said, “Son, I’m sorry to report, a Colonel outranks a Sergeant.” My son went into his room and slammed the door. Soon, the door came open and my son emerged saying: “Guess, what, Dad? I’ve decided to change my dog’s name.” I said, “You have, what are you going to name your dog?” Jim said, “We are changing his name from Sergeant to King.”

Later on I told this story at the Executive Board of the Kentucky Baptist Convention and one of the pastors out in the audience said, “Seems like a chip off the old block to me,” at which time we all had a good laugh.

Jim loved good quality food and when we would drive to Florida for summer vacation I’d need to stop along the way and get oysters on the half-

shell for him. Soon my wonderful wife taught Jim to cook and he would even make eggs benedict. When in New York City, we would go to the Algonquin Hotel so Jim could have eggs benedict for breakfast.

When Jim was in the fifth grade he had been given 20 math problems for his homework assignment. Problem 19 and 20 were trick problems and when he asked me to help, I did. The next day when I came home from work young Jim was beaming from ear to ear. He said: "Dad, you were the only fifth grade father to get problems 19 and 20 correct. All the other fathers got it wrong." Boy did that make my chest swell because I had been made a star in the eyes of my son.

As the old saying goes: "See the marching band, everyone is out of step except my Johnny." Well, this time that saying is true, but it wasn't a marching band it was a horse show in which our son participated. Jim was approximately 12 years old. He was one of the finalists in the show. The judge couldn't decide on the winner so he asked each rider to back up their horse. At the appropriate time, Jim's horse was the only horse to step forward before stepping backward. All the others were adult men and they went backward before stepping one foot forward, as was proper for that event. The crowd laughed, but as it turned out Jim and his horse were the only ones in the event who had properly followed the protocol, so he won the event. I was beaming with pride. Jim also won so many other horse-showing events and roping contests thanks largely to his cousin Wayne.

Jim had great insight into people or a good antenna for bologna. He somehow could read people so well that it was scary. During his junior year in high school, while sitting in class, the soon-to-be principal was teaching history and Jim listened with his mischievous smile. Jim had the ability to see through people's pretensions. The teacher looked at Jim and threw him out of class. Later he apologized. Dinah went up to the school to see why Jim had been thrown out of school and the teacher said he looked at Jim's discerning smile and couldn't stand it. I suppose he knew Jim saw through him.

I hope you are writing down stories about your child. Please share them with all of us, I love to get to know your children.

The following letter was written by Young Jim's first grade teacher May 18, 2007 (2 days before Jim's angel date):

Dear Dinah,

Throughout the years, my thoughts are often about Young Jim, you, and Jim, but especially at this time of year.

Looking back, I watched Jim his first year in school. I asked for the first grade when there was a vacancy because I was getting children who were not ready for the 2nd grade. I was so happy when Jim came to my room. Not because of our friendship, or because of who his parents were, but because...why, there was just a connection and I wanted to teach him, and I thought he needed me.

I taught 25 years, and my best memories are of that year! I only remember Jim and Gene III, but I do remember knowing other children that also should have had a better year their first year. The joy of teaching; the joy of children learning.

Jim, always a sweet, loving, well-behaved child, whose eyes followed everything. A knock at the door, eyes brightening when his mother and Christ appeared there, coming into the classroom for times of fun, cookies, and other goodies. Perhaps they were planned times, but I remember them as spontaneous, unplanned, happy times.

The planned time that I remember was going across to Walnut Street and watching them produce chalk sidewalk artistic masterpieces!

As I have previously said, I watched him, one of my children throughout his school years.

Last school memory, chaperoning a school dance, and cutting in (only briefly) to dance with Jim and then Gene.

Forever the picture in my mind is a young Jim walking between his parents.

When touring your newly remodeled home (the President's Home) during the open house several years ago. It was so beautiful, but more beautiful and of more interest to me was seeing and spending time in Jim's room.

I cannot even imagine experiencing the loss of a child, yet thinking of the things that I know of which have been and are being done by you and Jim, my words cannot express. It was a loss, but he is ever-present and his memory lives on in so many ways, ways that are known and was unknown to us.

The stadium (the football stadium is named for young Jim) when we attend events or even pass by.

*The stained glass windows
The garden and the Christmas Box Angel
Our visits to Highland Cemetery (where Jim is buried)
Our church hymnals, previous and the new ones (we gave them in memory of Jim)*

Graduation and Baccalaureate Ceremonies (we give the flowers in memory of Jim. Each year there are 18 red roses, white roses for the number of years since his death)

Dedication to helping others, the wonderful work that has and is being done to help others in their grief and survival.

Scholarships that have and continue to help so many students. (We have given over 70 Jim Taylor, II scholarships)

For more than 10 years, I have attended Honor's Night at WHS to present certificates for Good Citizenship and American History from our DAR. I have heard from our superintendent about the Jim Taylor, II Scholarships, seen presentations, and heard from past recipients. I also have heard about Eugene West award. I never knew him, our former pastor, but in the past, I considered this the highest award given to a senior in name only, with no scholarship or monetary value. I am proud to say that both our daughter, Laurel, and grandson, Aaron, got this award. Now I consider the Jim Taylor, II Scholarship tops, and 2nd, Eugene West award. I sooo wanted a grandchild to get the Jim Taylor award. I am happy to say that several cousins were recipients. I only learned last year that there was an application! So this year, grandson Steven made application.

I don't get on-line often, and the last time I visited your website, I was overwhelmed! The J.I.M. ceremony; so moving. I must go back there.

Our choir sang words from a scripture, which I must look up, and my meaning which I have shared with Whitley (granddaughter), and which I think about everyday and I am sharing with you, "We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, looking down, encouraging us to do." Yes, I am sure that those who have gone before us are there, in the balcony at Church, in our homes or wherever we are, and Young Jim is smiling his smile, his eyes show the smile too, and he is cheering you on!!!

Wishing you well and strength for all you do!

*Lots of love,
Wanda*

Grief Grafts

Barb Lawrence's daughter, Susan (3-5-79), died from viral encephalitis, 6-2-87.

Dear Dinah,

Thank you for remembering Susan on her anniversary. It doesn't seem possible that 20 years have passed since her death. I didn't think I would live long enough to see the first anniversary. I thought my heart would break before a year ended.

I want you to know that Jim died November 17, 2005. He was perfectly healthy until July of 2005 when he started to show signs of fatigue. As it turned out, he had pancreatic cancer which had already spread to his liver. The doctor told him he might live for three months without treatment, and maybe a bit longer with treatment. He chose to get chemo and the chemo caused strokes. He died three months to the day after being diagnosed.

While life is very different for me now, I'm at least consoled that Susan and her father are together again and that they are both preparing a home for me when my time comes.

Appreciate every moment that you have with your husband.

Sincerely,

Barb Lawrence

I asked her if I could print her email and asked her how Jim's death compared to Susan's:

Dinah,

I have no objection to your using my e-mail in your July newsletter.

To be honest with you, I think Jim's death was a little easier for me.

For one thing, I had a lot more warning and I knew that his death was inevitable. However..... it was still a lot harder than I thought it would be. I always thought that nothing could be worse than losing one of my children, so I was expecting it not to hurt as much.

It was another "tragic" loss, but it was just "different."

Our greatest bond was our love for each other and for our children.

I always knew that his hurt in Susan's death was equal to mine and knowing that, certainly helped me. Even though our grief wasn't the same, and we didn't always understand where the other person was in that journey, we were there to help one another as best we could.

Now, I'm dealing with my grief alone in this earthly life.

I cried just as hard for myself after Jim died as I did after Susan died and each day brings me new trials to face alone. I am thankful that I have a faith in God and in a life hereafter. Each day on earth is just one day closer to being reunited with them in the near future.

Jim convinced me to stay involved actively with the Compassionate Friends through his illness. He wanted me to have something solid to hold on to after his death. I'm glad that he insisted because I would have dropped out completely to take care of him and I probably would not have gone back to doing the newsletter for our chapter after he died. He was always thinking of me first and he was always the better planner. I miss Jim more than anyone could imagine.

Barb

Jeanne Lucke's son, Nick (6-3-80), died in an auto accident, 7-23-04.

Jeanne wrote:

All I can say is thank you for being there. I do not know what I would have done if I had not had you. I was as everyone is at this time, new to this, with no resources, but yet, you reached out to me and it means so much to me. His death has totally changed my life. I used to be a very energetic person who hated just sitting around doing nothing, and now I cannot even find the energy to do anything. (Few and far between.)

The first two years (after his death) on Nick's birthday, I did everything I could. I got balloons; I went and decorated where he was killed and the cemetery. I went all out. This year, I couldn't do anything. I wanted to have a cookout, I wanted to invite my two sons and granddaughter over, I wanted to celebrate, but I spent 4 days in bed and couldn't talk to anyone.....When does it get better?

I called my oldest son the night before Nick's birthday just to talk, and for some stupid reason, when I am trying to be strong, I just start crying...and he says it's time to stop dwelling and move on.....And then I

talked to my other son and he said his day consists of going to Nick's grave, which was something that I couldn't do, nor could Matt.

I push the feelings away because it hurts too much. I do not want to feel that pain again, but then again, I know I need to. But I can't, it will take me down and I need to function and support myself. I have no insurance; I have no means of talking to anyone. My friends are so there, but they do not understand. My family is few and far between right now. We used to be a big close family and now it is a small family far away.

I remember so much about Nick because, as much as I hate to say this, he and I were so much closer than the other boys because we understood each other. He had so many warnings that he was not on the right path. Stupid things like a dog biting him in the eye, walking down the street and a mirror on a truck hits him, going with a friend to get something to eat and the friend was so drunk he drove into a house and left my son to die because he didn't remember that he was in the car. My son lost his spleen and then, toward the last, getting a ride home after playing cornhole to be with his girlfriend and the driver didn't care about anyone except himself. He left four "friends" to die while he ran away.

I can see Nick apologizing to me; that was the kind of son he was. He was so into helping everyone and he talked to me all the time. He knew his life was not going the right way and he told me, "Mom, I am doing everything I can do to stay away from trouble."

I miss him so much. I thought 3 years (of grieving) would be long enough, but the pain doesn't go away and I can't fix him. I can't fix my other sons, I can't fix myself. And I know my sons are doing the same thing. Push away the pain. That is the only way around it even though it does not work.....and his "deathdate" is coming up in July. A long hard time for me ... His birthday and his DD June 3-July 23. I still hear my oldest son when he called me to tell me that Nick was dead. I lived out of state. That phone call gives me nightmares and I can only imagine what it does to him. I can't fix my two other sons and they are having a hell of a time. And I guess that just adds to it. You know when they are 2, 4, 6, and 8 years old you can fix things, but there is no fixing this... So I am helpless.....

Another email:

Just to let you know for whatever reason... last week I was listening to Cindy Bullens on my stereo. I had it kind of loud. I was fixing something to eat in the kitchen and listening to the music that was in the living room. Her music helps me deal Nick's death. Well, a police officer--with an attitude-----

- came to my door and harassed me and gave me a disorderly conduct ticket and the ticket just states that my music was too loud. I zone out on music or TV. Sometimes that's how I deal with it. I have to go to court tomorrow to see a judge and pay a \$150.00 ticket which I cannot afford, and try to explain why the stereo was too loud. It was loud to drown out my sorrows. And I am terrified. I have been throwing up all night. I have no record, no speeding ticket no nothing. The last time I went to court was to see my son's killer put in jail for 85 years.....

I emailed Jeanne to ask what happened at court:

I went to court and I was so nervous and upset. I didn't get a lawyer because I didn't think I needed one for that. The first thing I see is a sheet of paper stating that I had to make a plea. Guilty, not guilty, no contest. It took me a while to figure it out. I had written down everything that I wanted to say. All of the other people with disorderly conduct charges dealt from a variety of drug, alcohol, etc. and I just had my music too loud. I was all prepared to give this small speech. Everything else really confused me, so when the judge called my name, I just said, "No one complained about my music, I'm sorry." Down comes the hammer as it did for everyone else in the court. GUILTY... \$150.00 fine. It took about 3 seconds. My plan of action should have been pleading down to the true lesser charge which was "excessive noise," but I froze. Just glad it's over. And from now on, I'll be sure my windows are closed and I don't turn up Cindy's music too high! As stupid as it sounds, that was a very stressful situation for me. And I am a 52-year-old grandma with a disorderly charge. Oh well. Figure life!!

Thanks again for helping me through last week!!!

Another email:

#1. Just in retrospect, I think that the hardest thing for me, and I do not know how many others go through this, was being single. I was in a relationship that wasn't working very well 600 miles away, when I got the phone call, and got zero support, there wasn't anything except to beg him to take me to the airport.

#2. No one to talk to about the old times, about when Nick was growing up. My family is spread all around the country and has been for a long time. No closeness there.

#3. Two weeks after my son died, I picked up all my stuff and moved 600 miles back to Ohio. My brother helped me; he drove and paid for the U-

Haul. I realized that there was nothing more important than being here for my two sons and my 3-year-old granddaughter whom I just spent a glorious 24 hours with!!

#4. Moving, cutting off my 3 year relationship, quitting my job, quitting my life. Nowhere to move to, no job, grief overcoming me, confusion, broke, helpless, no insurance.....but I had 2 very good friends that took me in and helped me through the first year. And I owe them my life!! But after that first year, I've done the rest on my own. I am proud of where I am, but it was a very hard road to travel alone. The support was not there anymore-- here and there, but a big change.

So I guess my point here is that as an exception to being married or in a relationship, I know that a death like this can cause a lot of those to go bad. Doing it alone is hard too, and changing my whole life out of nowhere in a matter of a couple of weeks, was tough. But I did it, good or bad, and I am here for my kids and my granddaughter; the best I can be. Still have no insurance, still haven't been able to afford the luxury of counseling, been to some support groups, and doing the best I can do.

I guess if you look at the stress tests, and everything that I went through, it would put the meters over the top. And I am sure that I am not the only one. So maybe if I reach out to those that really don't have anyone??? I am not sure if that matters or not. I don't know. And I don't mean to make it sound like my grief is any different, because I know it is not. Nothing changes that. But maybe some of the aftermath of dealing with all the things to deal with is different. I don't know.

*Thanks,
Jeanne*

Jeanne wrote this note to Nick on his angel date:

*Nick,
Today is the day that you left us three years ago. It seems like yesterday. It just doesn't get any easier. Matt and Kris's heart are as broken as mine. I remember every minute of this day that you left. And every minute of it hurts so bad. I know you would want me to keep going, and I try, but it will never ever erase the hole in my heart, or in your brothers' hearts. I remember the last time that I came to visit and the day I left, I could not understand why I stood in front of you three and made a fool out of myself and could not stop*

crying. It was no different than any other visit, and I did not understand. Now I do. Somewhere deep in my heart and soul I knew that I would never see you again. And I am so sorry I left. I came back but that doesn't make it any better. I hope you are at peace, I hope you know how much you are loved and missed. To go on has been a struggle as nobody can ever, ever understand, not only for me but for your brothers as well. We are all heartbroken and have such a pain that nothing will ever remove. You will never be forgotten; you are always loved, and always missed, not just by your family, but by your friends too. They also have a deep hole in their hearts. They miss you and love you as we all do. You made such an impact on everyone you ever came in contact with. I do not and will not understand why you went away, when you could have done so much good here. I love you son like you will never know, and you are so missed and loved by everyone, your friends, your family, and every life you have touched. I miss you.....

I asked Jeanne if I could print her email and asked her if she wrote or kept a journal:

*Hey,
yes, I write some here and there. Need to more often. I just felt like if I wrote this and sent it on, the more people that read it, would help get closer to Nick. I know doesn't make sense. But it helped. This morning, for the first time ever, I looked out the window and saw two of the biggest most beautiful bright yellow and black butterflies that I have ever seen before. One fluttered by, the other landed and looked right at me. Right after the I left my house and down the street saw two brand new baby deer on the side of a busy road. It was just really odd for both of that to happen on the same day, and on the day my son died.*

Nick's symbol is a butterfly.

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

Colette is very busy with the foundation in her daughter's name:

Dear Dinah:

I am very, very busy these days. The Foundation is a full time job and sometimes far more. Every so often Patty reminds me it is 10:00 pm, what am I doing on the computer. Check our website; you will see some of the events.

We just had a skin screening at the Legislature and have another one coming up at Jones Beach. We are the only game in town doing what we are doing - there is soooooooooooooo much to be accomplished but I finally feel we are well off the ground and making inroads to some corporations which is needed for finance.

I won't be around forever and CCMAC will need to pay someone to facilitate things. I presented at a pharmaceutical company which conference their other sites, one being Boulder Colorado. They asked would I fly there ----- instead I am going again to the site on the Island to do another seminar just for them.

Apparently there isn't a local organization focusing on Skin Cancer/Melanoma.

Thomas (her son) has taken a position with the State of Louisiana for a year enabling him to do his research for his doctorate. Of course he loves what he does, is setting up some sort of a system Statewide which has never been done before re treatment modalities.

Sometime I would love to get to Jim's Picnic again but there doesn't seem to be enough days in the week. I am attaching a PSA we had produced which is quite powerful. A Doc from the Mayo Clinic requested permission to use it, saying it was the best he had seen. We showed it at the National Council for Skin Cancer Prevention Meeting in Washington and at least six of the organizations requested a copy. The Skin Cancer Foundation asked to put their logo on it and send it around the country. Of course we said yes, as long as the message gets out.

Hugs to you both as we continue on our journey.

I know Colette puts the ideas in my head - she has in fact thanked me for acting on the thoughts she puts in my head. I so strongly feel her presence. Amazing how the Lord leads when we step aside and allow it to happen.

Colette



You can view this PSA by clicking on the icon.

This is Colette's website. I hope you will get involved.

Colette's symbol is a sunflower.

Greg & Michele Mistler's son, Andy (10-22-86), died in an auto accident, 8-7-04.

Michele wrote this in August of 2006:

It's been two years since a car accident took the life of my seventeen year old son, Andy. I can't believe it's really been two years, it really seems like yesterday. However, I can remember the details of that week and I know I'll never forget them.

Butterflies are special to our family because they remind us of Andy. To end his burial ceremony, 100 monarch butterflies were released into the air. It really was uplifting to see these beautiful creatures fly high into the air. Many landed on special people and then flew on their way. Perhaps because butterflies are a symbol of eternal life it provided us some joy on that difficult day.

On the anniversary of his rebirth last year, we had a day of remembrance in our backyard. Many friends and family gathered to remember Andy and celebrate his life. Fifty monarch butterflies were released to send our love to Andy in Heaven. It was a beautiful sight and the butterflies lingered in our backyard for several weeks. Still today when we see a butterfly, it reminds us that Andy is around us always.

This year on Andy's rebirth anniversary, I decided I was ready to visit the scene of the accident. It had taken place on a country road about an hour away from our home. I was somewhat apprehensive, but knew it was something I needed to do. My sister and brother-in-law accompanied me to the sight. In the daylight, it was a serene spot on a country road. At night, it was a dangerous winding road. My sons had placed a cross at the sight, soon after the accident. After two years, the cross was still there, along with pieces of his car. We placed some flowers and an angel by the cross. My brother-in-law offered up a prayer. My sister asked God to keep showing us signs that Andy was ok, especially through the butterflies. As I stood weeping, I kissed the cross to say goodbye. About 30 seconds later a big beautiful butterfly came out of nowhere & landed on me. It was as if it was kissing me back. As we looked around, there were no other butterflies

around the area. God showed us a sign. It reinforced the fact that my son is in Heaven and is doing fine. This brings me hope that we will be together again some day.

Michele Mistler

Michele wrote this after the conference:

My husband & I would love to come to the conference in Williamsburg next year. We stopped to see the dome in February and it was amazing. It was a very special place and very beautiful.

I just reviewed the memorials on the website & they are beautiful. The whole website is such a great tribute to our children.

I feel blessed to have met you and thank you for being so inspiring to other parents suffering the loss of a child.

*Blessings,
Michele Mistler*

Andy's symbol is a Monarch butterfly.

Mike & Diane Cooper's son, David (2-7-90), collapsed and died at rowing practice, 2-14-07.

Dear Dinah and Rosemary,

Thank you both for everything that you do to help other families who are dealing with the debilitating loss of loved and adored children. I don't know if I can say this enough, so please accommodate my need to repeat this every time I write to you!

I don't do digital photography, so it's taken me a while to figure out how to get a photo to you. The one that I have selected is of both David and Reid.

(Reid is on the left and David is on the right) My reason for choosing this photo is simple -- I am grieving both the loss of my kind and gentle David AND the loss of the beautiful twin relationship that I got to witness for 17 glorious years. I hope you can see in this photo how much Reid and David truly love one another.

Dinah, you asked about David's symbol. We have decided that David's symbol should be a red bird (Cardinal). David's favorite color is red -- in

fact, I can't believe he is not wearing red in the photo I sent to you! Red was David's way of setting himself apart from Reid; he used to say, "You can tell us apart because I'm the one who wears red." Recently, when I have been feeling most sad, a cardinal has come to play in front of my window. One night last week, when I was awake and crying at 1 a.m., I heard the loudest bird singing outside -- I could hear him through the closed windows and over the sound of the air conditioner. When I opened the door to see what was going on (at 1 a.m.!), there was a cardinal singing his heart out in the tree in our front yard. He was all alone. All the other birds were asleep.

Love to you both. I hope to see you again soon.

Diane



David's symbol is a Cardinal.

Garren & Stacy Goss' daughter, Michelle Goss Broadway (3-11-87), died as a passenger in an auto accident, 1-21-05.

Stacy tells how they are reinvesting in memory of Michelle:

I wish I could come to the conference so badly, but I have other commitments that weekend. My husband and I are going to Africa on a mission's trip. We did this last year as a family in honor of our daughter, Michelle. You see, Michelle was signed up to go with our church in the summer of 05 but she went home to be with the Lord in January of 05. So, we donated money to build a building in Zambia in her memory. We actually were able to help build it last summer. Now it is complete so we can't wait to see it!!

Please pray for us during our trip. Our children aren't going this time and it is difficult to go without them. So please pray for all of us. We leave Sunday, June 3, and will return on Sunday, June 17.

*Thank you for all that you do for all of us.
God Bless,*

Stacy

Received this email after their mission trip:

Hi Dinah!!

Well we have made it home, whew!! What an awesome mission trip it was!! Michelle's building isn't finished yet but hopefully next month. The roofing materials are in a shipping container and they've had a problem getting the container to the Bible College. I just laughed though and told my hubby that God's just making sure we come back next year!

I asked Stacy if she had selected a symbol for Michelle:

Okay Dinah... Maybe I can get through telling you all of this. Right now I want Michelle's symbol to be a dragonfly. Last year when we went to Zambia I walked down to a river and there were the most beautiful bright red dragonflies!! I had never seen red ones before. When we got home all the sudden we have dragonflies all the time. The ones here are a beautiful blue. They will even sit on my finger sometimes. For some reason they always remind me of Michelle. So dragonfly it is.

Also, if you would like, you are welcome to use the letter Michelle wrote that is on the website. As I was creating her website, I was trying to come up with something for the about section that would "fit." Well I found an assignment she had done in one of her honors classes and the assignment was to write a letter to someone introducing yourself. Wow is all I can say. This was an honors English class. What would they be doing writing that kind of assignment? I know why, it was a gift from God. Who better to tell about Michelle than Michelle herself.

Michelle's autobiography:

"Hello, stranger! My name is Lila Broadway, but you can call me Michelle. On March 11, I turned seventeen years old. I was born in Montgomery, Alabama and now live thirty minutes north in a city named Prattville (a.k.a. hick town). I am currently a senior (05' baby) at Prattville High and I will graduate with honors. About four months ago my boyfriend, Bobby Jack Hollon, proposed to me.... so now I am engaged. I just recently grew out of the know-it-all stage of my life.

You know how annoying kids are that think they know everything? Well, yeah... that was me about two years ago. No matter what my parents

said, they were ALWAYS wrong and I was ALWAYS right. You know what I mean...no one could tell me anything. Between the time I was fifteen and sixteen, my dad, Garren, started looking like an old man, because of all the white hairs I gave him (or so he claims!). Luckily, my parents are Christians and therefore made it through that very patience trying time.

My mom, Stacy, is one of the most influential people in my life, because of her Christianity and gentleness. Through her actions, she has taught me forgiveness and perseverance. No matter what wrong I have done in my past she has always forgiven me and loved me. I have seen her “turn the other cheek” to people who have done her wrong. She teaches me perseverance by always staying on my case, because she knows what is best for me (even when it makes me mad). There is one other person who is extremely influential in my life and that is God.

God has taught me to have faith and be courageous. If people living in shacks can have faith that God will provide.... why can't we? He teaches me courage through His son Jesus. Jesus had the courage to die on the cross for our sins, so why do we not have the courage to stand up for God. It is because of God and my mom that I have such great memories.

Do you ever have a moment that you hope no one finds out about? Yeah, I thought so. I have been told numerous times that I should dye my hair blonde because of these moments. I remember one of these moments very vividly.

My parents were draining the water out of their waterbed and my brother and I had the “privilege” of helping out. My dad had the hose running from the bed into the tub in the front bathroom. Well, I had the simplest job there was... checking to see if water was coming out of the hose. I am not sure what I was thinking, but I walked into the bathroom, stepping over the hose, placed my hand under the faucet of the sink, and shouted to my dad, “Nothing is coming out.” Then I realized the hose was running to the tub (not the sink) and I quickly corrected myself. Unfortunately, my family saw this “blonde moment” and still teases me about it. I just smile and say, “Yeah....that was me...a lil' bit out there.”

Because I am “out there,” I am told I am a lot of fun. I am very blunt and outspoken. If you ever meet me that will be one of the first things you notice. I love to try new things and meet new people. I am not shy at all, which will help me with my career goals.

I plan to go to AUM (Auburn University of Montgomery) for a double major in business and early childhood education. One day I hope to own a daycare, but not before I marry Bobby (a.k.a. BJ) in May of 2005. My

*family is not too big or too small and this is why I plan to have three kids.
Well I do not know what else to tell you so I hope to hear from you soon.
Your Pen Pal"*

<http://www.michellebroadway.com/about.htm>

www.michellebroadway.com

Michelle's symbol is dragonflies.

Jack & Nancy Jarboe's daughter, Stephanie Williams (9-10-74), died in an auto accident, 12-1-06.

I asked Nancy if they had chosen a symbol for Stephanie:

Hi Dinah,

Let's use a robin for Stephanie's symbol since that robin keeps coming to my window several times a day. Stephanie died in a car wreck of massive blunt force trauma to her body as well as trauma to her brain. The cemetery got her cameo put on her crept Friday just in time for Memorial Day.

*Love,
Nancy*

Stephanie's symbol is a Robin.

Dan & Ann Sullivan's son, Billy (11-26-86), died as a result of Cystic Fibrosis & colon cancer, 5-8-06.

Ann wrote this about her Angel-hero Billy on his website:

In Loving Memory of "Angel Billy" ~ I would like to tell everyone a little bit - hopefully this won't be too long - about myself & my angel Billy. Dan & I have been married 27 years & had 3 wonderful children. Patty, Colleen & Billy; all born about 2 years apart. In fact Patty & Billy are exactly 4 1/2 years apart - both were born on Wednesday the 26th - Patty -

May, Billy - November. We always called Billy our "Immaculate Conception" - needless to say he wasn't "planned." He was the 1st grandson on both sides. I am from a family of 5 girls & all my parents grandkids are girls. One morning when Billy was about 18 months old he woke up wheezing - took him to the doctor, who put him in the hospital for tests. At this point Billy weighed 32lbs - he was a chunk, sweat test was performed & it came back negative, Cystic Fibrosis (CF) was ruled out. Assumed he had asthma & put on asthma medication. Fast forward to 4th grade, by this time Billy was also seeing a pediatric allergist. The summer between 3rd & 4th grade was not pleasant for Billy - seemed to always be on antibiotic, had chest X-Rays, & various blood tests. At times he seemed to be improving only to have a setback. The allergist decided to run another sweat test to start ruling out other causes for Billy's summer. It came back in the "grey" area, he talked to a Dr Akhter, a pediatric pulmonologist, & Dr. Akhter wanted another sweat test run - the results came back the same. Dr Akhter then said he wanted to see Billy. Dr Akhter took one look at Billy & told us he was 99% sure Billy had CF, but to make sure he admitted him to the hospital & many tests were run. I should say at this time Billy also only weighed 30 - 35lbs - he was small and skinny - but neither Dan nor I are what you would call big so we didn't realize anything was wrong with his height or weight. The tests confirmed Billy had CF. Dr Akhter also told us at that time he would do everything possible for Billy, but he wasn't sure what part of his lungs he could recapture & he couldn't be sure Billy would make it out of the hospital. Needless to say Billy pulled off one of his many "miracles" regarding his CF. His lung capacity made it up to about 50%. Now on the correct meds Billy thrived - he even took up the sport of ice hockey - loving every minute he played. Fast forward once again to Sept. 2005. Billy was now on a full ride scholarship to DeVry University - doing what he loved best & taking classes he loved in his favorite subject - computers - he was majoring in computer engineering. Over the years Billy & Dr Akhter formed a very special bond. They were friends - even the residents at the hospital knew when Billy was in Dr Akhter was to be called about any change or discomfort Billy had - day or night it didn't matter. Dr. Akhter even came to Billy's high school graduation party. Dr Akhter made the decision to keep his CF patients through college even though he was a pediatric doctor, after graduation they would have to go to an adult clinic. Billy always told the doctor he would show him he wasn't going to stop going to college so he would be stuck with Billy forever!!! Billy also had a porta cathe inserted in his upper right chest his freshman year of high school for when he had to go on antibiotics - the veins in his arms had

developed too much scar tissue from all the pick lines inserted over the years. When the portal scathe was not accessed he had to go to the doctor once a month to have Jeanne, Dr Akhter nurse, flush it. Since Billy could drive he usually made these trips himself which he did in Sept 2005. Jeanne asked him how things were going - Bill said fine he was heading to class after Jeanne flushed his portal scathe. Bill did mention that every once in a while he would get this twitch on his lower right side, Jeanne felt it said she felt something & wanted the doctor to have a feel, which he did, then he called in the gastro doctor who also felt & gave Bill an enema & told him to have me call his office to have a colonoscopy run - he was sure it was nothing but just to be on the safe side....When Bill came home from school he gave me the message & explained what happened at the doctors office. A colonoscopy was scheduled, the gastro doc said the first 1/2 of his colon was beautiful but when they got to the ascending part there was something there - took samples to send to lab. Wanted a CAT scan tomorrow, Dr Akhter wanted to see Billy after it & we would all meet on Friday morning to go over all the results. Dan did not come when Bill had his CAT scan - Billy had had them before & he planned on going to class after seeing the doctor. After his CAT scan we headed over to Dr Akhter's office & waited, talking to the nurses etc as we waited - Billy had been going to the doctor at least once a month for 10 years so he knew everyone & they knew him. Most along with the nurses from the hospital came to Billy's wake. Billy said he knew something was the matter the minute he saw Dr Akhter's face - that was how it was with the two of them. Billy had colon cancer - stage 3 it was already in the lymph nodes. Billy had no symptoms!!!! He was admitted to the hospital & surgery was scheduled. The surgeon said it was the biggest tumor he had ever seen. Parts were sent to hospital & labs all over the world for analysis. Billy now had two medical records he wished he never held - youngest person ever to have his type of colon cancer & the youngest person to have CF & colon cancer. He was given a month off & chemo started. Billy had to go to an adult oncologist - the pediatric ones had never seen or dealt with colon cancer. It was Billy & all the old people - they loved him. It was decided that after every 4 chemo treatments a CAT scan would be done. He had chemo for 3 days every other week - 4 hours at the doctors, the rest at home. He was to have chemo for 6 months. In Dec he had CAT & PET scans both came back clean - no cancer all he would have to do was finish out the chemo. He would be heading back to college in July - he was excited. 2006 started off with Billy in the hospital - a place he would spend most of Jan - April with various lung infections, the chemo was taking a toll on his body - especially his lungs. By April he was on oxygen 24/7 a CAT

scan was done during a hospital stay - a (ONE) suspicious cell was found in a lymph node in his neck. The chemo would change - which made Billy happy he would now be able to have milk shakes & ICEE's again. The type of chemo he was on for colon cancer he couldn't eat/drink anything cold. He said as long as he could again drink cold he was happy. Two weeks later - the middle of April - another CAT scan was done - it was all over. When we met with Dr Akhter after talking to his oncologist, with tears in his eyes he told us he could only give Billy weeks said he couldn't even give him a month. The cancer had now spread to all parts of his body - the kicker was it never invaded his lungs. When he was diagnosed with colon cancer his CF was finally under control - it had been over a year since he was in the hospital. Billy died two weeks later on May 8, 2006. His cousins were amazed at his wake that none of his friends knew he had CF let alone cancer. Even when he was going through chemo, when his friends would come home from college & they would go out - Billy never said a word about being sick. All Billy ever wanted was to be "normal." He finally got his wish!!! This year the tennis team named a tennis court after Billy - it was a wonderful dedication ceremony. Since Billy could no longer play hockey he decided to try tennis - a sport where his size wouldn't matter (he topped out at 5'6" 120 lbs). He never picked up a tennis racquet until that point. He played all 4 years of high school, three on varsity; 2 times he was all-conference. His senior year he was voted team captain & MVP. I could go on & on about stories I have learned about Billy. He was remarkable - a hero to many. His wake was unbelievable - I later found out there were about 50-60 kids in the parking lot telling Billy stories. I don't think many even made it inside. I think of the harsh reality so many of his friends have had to face with his death. Many called me in tears when they found out he died - asking how & why. They also made special arrangements with their professors at college to take their finals to be at his wake. Two of his best friends came over with roses for me on Mother's Day 6 days after he died. His best friend did not go back to school; instead he opted for the local community college for the year. He would stop by & visit us - it took a couple visits to realize it was always on the 8th of the month. His mom told me he goes to visit Billy's grave all the time - many times taking flowers - she can always tell when.... Billy always said he wanted to donate whatever organs he could. So his corneas were donated - the only organ he could. He always had the prettiest big brown eyes - everyone would comment on them, now someone else has sight because of him. I am learning to live with more pain than I ever thought possible. To take life one day at a time & thank God for that. Thank you for reading my & Billy's story. Sorry it is so-o long. I

always feel better after telling it & trying to let people know how really special Billy was. I am sure all your kids were & are just as special. Thanks & a big HUG to everyone, Ann Sullivan

Billy loved ice hockey (in fact he was buried in his Chicago, Blackhawk Jersey), tennis - to play not watch on TV, computers, video games. Take your pick - he just loved life to the fullest!!!

<http://www.geocities.com/angelsofhearttoheart/BillySullivan.html>

The following article was written by Billy's doctor - it appeared in the Chicago Tribune on May 6, 2007. Billy is William in this article:



Dealing_with_Death.
pdf

Billy's symbols, according to Ann: "He loved ice hockey (in fact, he was buried in his Chicago, Blackhawk Jersey), tennis - to play not watch on TV, computers, video games. Take your pick - he just loved life to the fullest!!!"

Michael & Glenna Todovich's son, Aaron (6-12-78), completed suicide, 11-14-03.

I sent Michael & Glenna an email on their Aaron's birthday. Glenna responded:

Dear Dinah,

God Bless You. As the tears run down my face, it seems like only yesterday I held my son in my arms, I have been meaning to write to you and to Rosemary. My son and I attended the documentary in Lexington but I had to leave fairly quickly when it was over because we both had to be at work the next day. It was a wonderful film and made quite an impression on us both. I wanted to stay and to meet both of you but thought I needed to get back. Thank you for all you do and I know all of our angels are smiling down on us each and every day until we can all be together again.

I asked Glenda if I could print her email, and asked what she thought about the documentary:

Dear Dinah,

My son was deeply affected by the film, he was very close to his brother and the man who had two sons who committed suicide made a definite impression on us both. In the end the film did help us realize that we are not alone with our sorrow and that we were very fortunate to have had Aaron here with us for 25 years. It is a long lonely journey when you lose a child or sibling and it is very comforting to be with "fellow travelers" because they truly know the path that we are traveling. Please feel free to use any or all of my comments and again, please thank Rosemary and Luther for their "labor of love."

Thanks to you as well, Dinah, all of you have brought us together in this "special group" that we would prefer not to be a member of and yet your love and caring has helped us all to carry on, as we must until we can all be together again.

Sincerely,

Glenna L. Todovich

Mother of Aaron David Todovich

6/12/78-11/14/03

Aaron's symbols are a saxophone, piano and guitar.

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

Paul and Claudia have been very active in MADD. This is an article about their grief group:



ST. ANTHONY COMMUNITY HOSPITAL
MOUNT ALVERNO - SCHERVIER PAVILION - DAY AT A TIME
Bon Secours Charity Health System

DATE: April 6, 2007

CONTACT: Ann Lombardi-Nathan, Director • Public & Media Relations

PARENTAL BEREVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP SPONSORED BY ST. ANTHONY COMMUNITY HOSPITAL MEETS MONTHLY AT MOUNT ALVERNO CENTER

*Warwick - In 1999, Warwick resident **Claudia Grammatico** and her husband, Paul, were living in another community on Long Island when their son Paul, 26, and his best friend were both killed by a drunk driver.*

“I couldn’t breathe,” said Claudia Grammatico, who admits that no one who has never experienced such a tragedy can imagine the pain and suffering caused by the loss of a child. “And it doesn’t matter what age that child was,” she added. “It might be a baby or an older adult, it is still your son or daughter. And how long ago it happened is not important. When you lose a child there is no time.”

After her son’s death, Grammatico felt she had to share her grief with someone. She joined a local chapter of “The Compassionate Friends,” a national nonprofit, self-help support organization that offers friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. It took time but the organization’s meetings were helpful and Grammatico soon began her journey back to normal life. She became active with Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and also the New York Organ Donor Network.

A little over two years ago Grammatico and her husband moved to Warwick to be closer to their daughter and son-in-law. But there was no chapter of The Compassionate Friends or any similar organization in this area. “I felt lost,” she recalled. “I didn’t know anyone here and I needed to talk to another mother who had lost a child.”

Fortunately, in her position as a member of the Board of the New York Organ Donor Advisory Counsel, Grammatico had an opportunity to meet with Joie Ogrodnick, Director of Patient Relations at St. Anthony

Community Hospital. During their conversation, Grammatico mentioned the loss of her son and the value she placed on being able to meet with a support group. Ogrodnick offered to help her form a program for people in this area and to arrange for a facility where the members could meet.

The Parental Bereavement Support Group, sponsored by St. Anthony Community Hospital, celebrated its first anniversary this past March. The Group meets on the fourth Monday of every month, from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., in the Greenbriar Room at Mount Alverno Center, 20 Grand St., Warwick, NY. The Bon Secours Warwick Health Care Campus includes St. Anthony Community Hospital, Schervier Pavilion and Mount Alverno Center.

The Support Group is open to anyone who has lost a child to any cause and at any age, including miscarriage. There is no religious affiliation required and there are no membership dues or fees. Both men and women attend, with or without their spouse. The gatherings are informal and although everyone has an opportunity to be heard, no one is required to speak or discuss the details of a child's death. After attending a meeting or two, however, Grammatico reports there are often smiles and laughter and most people become more open with one another. All conversations are confidential.

"They learn that they are not alone and that they can go on living," said Ogrodnick. "And besides, if they are feeling particularly low, they can always phone or email another member at any time. The pain of losing a child can often best be understood by another bereaved parent."

In addition to the emotional and spiritual support at meetings, members are invited to honor their children by participating in special events such as an Ecumenical Candlelight Vigil in December that is celebrated throughout the world. A lending library with books and other material dealing with this subject are also available.

For additional information about the Parental Bereavement Support Group, call Joie Ogrodnick at (845) 987- 987-5107.

Bon Secours Charity Health System includes three New York hospitals: Bon Secours Community Hospital, Port Jervis, Good Samaritan Hospital, Suffern, and St. Anthony Community Hospital in Warwick. Bon Secours Charity Health System provides the services of a Certified Home Health Agency, two long-term care facilities, an assisted-living and adult-home facility, and several other community based medical programs serving nearly half a million people in seven counties and three states. Bon Secours Charity Health System is a member of the Bon Secours Health System, Inc., based in Marriottsville, Maryland which is a not-for-profit Catholic health

system employing more than 19,000 caregivers in 9 states. For more information visit www.bschs.org

Paul and Claudia are in “Space Between Breaths” documentary.

Paul’s symbol is a butterfly.

David & Juanita Hicks’ daughter, Brandy (5-21-79), was killed in an auto accident, 9-13-97.

Juanita wrote about her experience at the conference:

Dinah

This was my first conference. I was glad to finally get to put a face with a name.

It was an honor to meet you. I did not get to come to the documentary and I guess I missed a great production by all the responses that you have. I did get to meet a lot of folks and there was a lot that I didn't get to meet. Dinah you and Rosemary have a great gift for people and I'm sure your children are so proud of you. I also got some of the books I had wanted for a while.

I could not find Children of the Dome here and I was so glad to get to read it and my Heart Notes and some other things. Thank you for all that you do.

When the documentary comes out I will have it so I can see what I missed.

Take special care and God Bless.

*Love,
Juanita*

Brandy’s symbols are a daisy, cat and mushrooms.

Lily Pegourie’s daughter, Celeste (5-17-77), was killed in an auto accident, 3-30-04.

Celeste was once a student at the University of the Cumberland
(formally Cumberland College)

Lily shared the two worlds she has lived in during the past 3 years:

*I've had a rough few days remembering Celeste. I love Cardinals.
(Birds that is!!) After all some of us bleed blue!!! The last Christmas
Celeste gave me a jigsaw puzzle, the quality kind of a beautiful northern
cardinal sitting on an evergreen bough that has snow. I put that together in
a couple of nights, remembering how she made that last Christmas so
special. Like she went out of her way to just shower me.*

*She loved jigsaw puzzles and had done a huge 1500 piece puzzle in
the shape of a maple leaf with many pictures inside of it with cats and kittens
in various poses. I had framed it for her. I won't get to see it again since
her husband took it.*

*I am going to frame this one but I cried as I worked it. I miss her so
desperately.*

*Legally it appears all the "stuff" that can be said and done, the pain,
the lies, the barbs is over. It will never change circumstances, then or now,
but I no longer fear opening the mail box dreading to see a return address
from whatever entity I got bombed with that day.*

*Compassionate Friends uses a term called, "new normal." Maybe
that is what can happen now. It has been over 3 years and I had no idea
from day to day of anything.*

*You asked me about sharing in the newsletter. That is fine. I was
browsing through the issues and person after person has losses because of
tragedy.*

*I shared with our Compassionate Friends group last month how I lost
a daughter on a Tuesday. I buried her the following Tuesday and my legal
nightmare started the following Tuesday.*

*I knew pain worse than surgery. There is no anesthesia to numb
physical, mental or emotional pain at that point. Then I face a world of
legality that is booby trapped with land mines.*

*Ours was a wrongful death suit. She was killed because a semi
tractor/trailer was parked illegally on I-65. Her husband ran under the
back of the trailer.*

*For 3 years I have lived in 2 worlds. One legal. One personal. A
legal one that is cold, heartless and wants you to do anything during your*

worst grieving because they can get you to make decisions then and you won't make good, sound, thought-out ones. You can be intimidated. You can be traumatized by all kinds of people.

I was told, when I had to go to court appearances, to stay calm, cool and collected. The judge does not want hysterics. The judge doesn't want to see your "emotions." I wasn't told this but the Judge doesn't want to see "MY HUMAN SIDE."

She had a name. She was a person. They treated the forms and written things like they were just statistics, numbers. She was my precious daughter.

I had to suffer, grieve and live on 2 planes. One I cried, I hurt, I grieved and desperately needed friends to walk with me. Friends kept their distance. I asked one person to go to a probate hearing with me. They told me they could do nothing, that I needed a good lawyer. They could not comprehend I just needed a FRIEND. Actually I found out then, and later, they really were not my friends. They wanted the details from time to time but only to pass on.

Other friends had jobs and couldn't help me, when Federal court hearings were in Bowling Green. No one had experienced any loss other than illness, sudden death with heart attack or something.

I found out that auto insurance pays liability if I am a passenger in your car. But, if your family member is in your car, your liability policy is voided. My grandson was denied \$50,000 because of legal maneuvering for months.

One thing after another. A ploy the courts, particularly accident claims like, is time. Draw it out. The farther it goes the less likely people remember. The less likely witnesses will be available. Lawsuits and legal stuff are expensive. If you don't have or run out of money, you can't fight for what is your right. When lawyers see there is nothing in there for them, or their chances are fading, they take cover. They may have been at your beck and call, bending over backwards the first months to do everything and you actually see them doing things. Then, when one hearing, one motion, one filing, one brief is not their way, they start telling you something else. They protect themselves.

All the time your life is on hold. Your emotions are caught in mid-air. You cannot say things to even your own extended family because it might affect the case. A comment. For me, I had to walk on eggshells because my entire relationship with my then 3-year-old grandson could be affected.

This week, the last form. The last filing. The last signature on the probate. The final money that the truck had to pay that will not pay for my grandson to go to one year of college is properly tended. Now I can be a mom. Now I can stop and think about Celeste. I can stop and think about the person I loved.

I can think about the spitfire, Celeste, that would be a total theatre act if she could have walked into any of these court hearings - learned what was being said and done -- she would have won academy awards. That does bring a smile to my face.

When she would have learned details she never knew about her husband in life she would have needed no director for a script. Had Celeste been in the wings - this motion picture would be an award winner in epic proportions. Celeste had the most beautiful brown eyes. But her eyes never belied one thing. Anger - move out of her way; Love - total passion; Hurt/Heartache/Loss - nothing she could do hid her tears ---

She had a degree in communications, loved theatre and was prepared to teach children. Now I can think and love and remember her.

The court would have me believe I never knew this person. They tried to make her to be just some human, yes, but nothing personal.

All across this group we have tragic loss. School shootings. Suicide. Accidents of all kinds. Legalities that have to be dealt with. Another layer of grief - or maybe not another layer as a layer than has to cover and push down our real, authentic grief, as I did mine.

I had to walk and talk to people, with no tears, in business-like ways, about one of the dearest people in my life. Maybe, to some degree, I could do this 3-5 years down the road, but not with the jagged, torn edges that were ripped apart in one horrifying phone call.

Not only a state trooper telling you, "she didn't make it," but then, a coroner in a small town, asking when you were going to come get her "personal effects." And literally expecting you to do so within 24 hours I found out. That was 85 miles from where I was. She was in a morgue and he is asking, "What funeral home do you want." I have not wrapped my mind around the fact I even need a funeral home. All of this within 3 hours from 4 PM to 7 PM on a Tuesday afternoon.

This week, I can walk in, close the door to the outside intruders, and start to assess my needs. I can sit down on the couch and cry for me. I can feel my personal, gut-wrenching tears that no one can tell me to "hold in check;" "leave them at the door"

No one knows, until you have had to walk that road; the dual layers of grief that tragic death brings. Over 3 years - but in some ways, for me, the beginning of my "new normal."

Dinah, you are a doll. You work so tirelessly and care so much. No one knows and understands. I heard someone say in the Cumberland community last weekend when I met them how "grief was so front and center at Cumberland. Memorial here and memorial there." I looked at them and said, "I am glad, you have no idea and I hope you never will. But remember those are individual people that lived and breathed like you do."

*Blessings,
Lilly Pegourie*

Lily had told me that their Compassionate Friends Group was having a balloon release on July 26th (Young Jim's birthday) so I asked her if she would send a turquoise balloon up for Jim.

Her response:

I sent up a very special turquoise balloon I found at Factory Card Outlet in memory of Jim. I attached it to the helium-filled ones we had in a light blue during our balloon release, July 26th.

We had a lovely time. They played a song, Mindy Carter wrote, called "Trent's Song" on a CD called "Free." It has a Compassionate Friends label on it but the main office hasn't been able to help me locate a copy. It was beautiful. You will love the words if I can get a copy.

We attached notes to our balloons. For Jim, I put "you are so dear and so special. Our special angel is watching over us each day. We love you dear, so much. Love Mom and Dad."

We went out into the open field in a state park and told stories about our children, played this CD and released the balloons. We stood there and watched, I know a good 5-10 minutes, until you could not even see the slightest pin head of one.

I was amazed they went so high. They floated up, out and along I-71 toward the Lexington-Cincinnati triangle.

I got my FIRST EVER postcard/note anything from Caleb (grandson) about a week ago. They had been in the Smokey Mountains. All it said was, "Pops, Grams and Ruthie. We had a good vacation. We got to ride go-carts."

Craig wrote that but the million-dollar blue ink was "CALEB" scrawled in his little 5-year-old hand. His little B at the end was actually a d but the long stem almost covered the entire width of the card.

This makes me hopeful I can see him next week when we go to Huntsville. I am going to fly down to spend a few days with Ruth. I wrote Craig today and asked him if he would let us see him. It may only be an hour or two, but I will take what I can get. Caleb starts school this fall and I have things for him. I told Ruth (daughter) I was not going to just mail a box and hope he might have gotten it. I am going to see him and give these things to him for school. It will have to be when Craig decides he wants to but I think he will let us see him.

I have contacted several families who have lost children. I still want to start an actual bereavement group. Bereaved Parents of America require you to have 4 people, who are 2 years down the road in grief work. I understand all of that and the reasons for it, but I have not been able to find the 4th person. Somehow though my contact info got into a UPS bulletin and I have had 2 inquiries from there.

I contacted a good friend who is a landscaper. We are starting to work on planting a tree at the gravesite. Three weeks ago, Butterscotch (Bud Bud) for short, had to be put to sleep. That was 1 of 2 male cats that belonged to Celeste. They were brothers. Both weighed about 21 lbs. each. He started losing weight and almost overnight dropped 1/3 of his body weight and totally dehydrated. I was devastated.

When I called Ruth in tear, she asked me what I was going to do. I told her I didn't want to bring him home. She stepped right in, called the vet, made arrangements to have his remains brought back to the clinic and she drove in from Huntsville just for that reason. I felt like I had lost another part of Celeste.

Ruth came in, went to Feeder's supply, got a small memorial stone, took the remains and went to the cemetery and buried Bud Bud with Celeste. Then she said a few words and we covered the ground real good so it didn't look we had dug much there. It was meaningful and when I couldn't do it I was glad she did.

So now I am working with the grounds people and my landscaper to put in a nursery quality tree.

Blessings,

Lilly: Lilly52068@aol.com

Celeste's symbols are cats and Mickey Mouse.

Woody and Donna Herndon's son, Roger (6/25/70), was killed in a plane crash at West Point, 8/2/91.

Donna shares their "gifts" from Roger:

Dear Dinah,

Thank you so much for sending your wonderful, meaningful poem. It helped us through the day. I spent much of the time decorating our front yard and house for the local Flags are Flying July 4th contest. It was so appropriate to be able to do that in memory of our Roger. The Roger's Wings daylily had nine spectacular blooms, including three in a cluster, a phenomenon I had never seen before! The most blooms on one day previously were eight on Father's Day! We also had one bloom on the gardenia bush that the MSU Athletic Dept. sent when Roger died. We took that special blossom to the cemetery and put it on his grave. Thanks for all you do for all of us fellow travelers. We love you and Taylor and are thankful that our sons brought us together.

Blessings,

Donna

(Donna is the person who came up with "I brake for butterflies" bumper sticker)

Roger's symbol is a monarch butterfly.

Charlotte Martin's son, Keith (1-16-71), drowned 2-21-97.

Charlotte is always finding ways of making people aware of the needs of the bereaved:

Dear Dinah,

The family who shared joint custody of Brian with me unexpectedly turned him back over to me full-time when I returned from the conference, so things have been unusually busy for me. The court ordered that a child psychologist get to the bottom of why Brian becomes so distraught when he has to go with the other family. I'm having to re-learn how to structure my time to do things that I want to do (like finish my two other videos). Keith's little girl will be 10-years-old on July 4th. In the few weeks following that, Brian will be four and my two other grandchildren will be six and eight. We usually have one party, but I would like to have each of them a party this year.

I may have already told you this, but I was sponsored as a 2007 Red Cross Hero for the work that I've done as an advocate for the bereaved who need and want help, support and understanding and the work in our community of providing free diapers and baby needs to babies in need. I absolutely hated being called a "hero" in part, because the man who risked his life to save my son was so devastated that he wasn't able to save him and refused to be called a hero. But I agreed to being nominated because I thought the Red Cross may be a good connection since they work with catastrophic events and most often there are deaths in catastrophic events. I thought the publicity might help with our mission. There was supposed to be something on TV, on the radio, an insert in the newspaper and a media-covered breakfast event. What really happened was the Red Cross took my picture with ten other "heroes" and we're on a couple of billboards - - one that is completely hidden behind a clump of trees and the other one that is so far out in a field that the only thing that can be seen is the big red cross. HA!

I have recently been nominated as a "hero" for some kind of campaign being done by CNN. That will be a big deal for those chosen by CNN and will receive national attention with Anderson Cooper.

A new bereaved parent organization in California called "Memory Jar" has added a link to my web-site.

I have started trying to get my Live Forever plant and DVD (at no charge) to parents whose child has died in the war. I sold eight DVDs at the conference and gave 10 away, some to bereaved parents that I met at the hotel who were not attending the conference. Suzy Christman called me from Ohio the other day and said she had just watched the video and thought it was wonderful and she planned to show it to a group of people.

Locally, we're working on starting "The Compassion of Jesus Christ Ministries," which we are hoping will grow into a national ministry. Dinah, I found the best book that I have ever read called Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart, written by Kenneth Hauck, the founder of Stephen

Ministries. He tells of many of the terrible things that people have said to us - - and he tells in some instances why it is a terrible thing to say. The title, of course is taken from the scripture in Proverbs that says "Singing songs to someone who is sad is like taking away their coat on a cold day." When my sister asked me why so many people in so many different churches hurt me after Keith died, I remember telling her that the simplest way that I could tell her is that they did what that Proverbs scripture said not to do. I knew she just didn't get it. But this book is very clear in explaining what I was trying to say.

If you want to suggest to others to nominate someone for the CNN Hero award, I think it is a great chance to get some greatly needed exposure. Our newspaper editor continues to say "people just aren't interested in this."

Love

Charlotte Martin

www.helpthebereaved.com

Keith's symbol is karate.

Bess Masters' son, Tommy (6/24/70), died in an auto accident, 9/14/95.

Bess stresses how important it is that we support each other:

Oh Dinah, how could we make it without you? I just got home from the cemetery and my heart is very heavy of course, but I passed Drew and Jeremiah (Luther & Rosemary Smith's sons) as I went to Tommy's grave and I thought of all the other sweet children there whose parents I know, and this supports me in my journey.

Thank you so much for your poem, and for your ever-lasting memory of your bereaved friends.

Bess Masters

Tommy's symbol is the Rolling Stones.

Herchel & Shirley Mincks' son, Loyde (12/26/59), was murdered, 04/05/02.

Loyde had planned a very special surprise for Herchel and Shirley for their 45th wedding anniversary:

Now about my long awaited anniversary trip. Five years ago our son Loyde planned our 45th anniversary. A trip to San Antonio while he and our two daughters put a small pond in the back yard. They had planned on sending us off and staying at our house for the week and working in our yard. We have three acres of pasture land and it really needed some plants. It was to be a surprise for me that was to be June 16th. Well we know that didn't come about for Loyde was killed on April 5th that is the week he planned this with his dad. I always wanted something to hold onto that Loyde had for me special so his dad let me know this about three or four weeks after Loyde died just when I needed a blessing. Well our Anniversary blessing came true this year. This being our 50th, our girls and two granddaughters followed thru with Loyde's plans. The girls went with us but our pond is still under the deck. I can't do that yet but the trip was good and the girls are funny and we laughed a lot. One evening everything in our van was stolen. The teenagers had DVD players, DVD, I-pods; everything was taken. Our 12-year-old said when things were getting a little nuts "come on let's build a bridge and get over it." It was our last day there and a beautiful day at the beach.

That is why we did not come to the picnic this year. We were going to San Antonio that week.

Keep us in your hearts; my June month was very hard, but I know that can happen often. My brother has had two cancer surgeries and he moved in with us so I can take care of him. Right now he is doing ok. Thank you for the heart notes. Susie bought me a book and sent it to me. She is a life saver.

*God is so good. So many people to lean on.
May the Lord bless each of your days.
Herchel and Shirley Mincks
Loyde (Eagle)*

Loyde's symbol is an eagle.

**Syrena Gibson's son, Nathan Bowyer (8-11-94), drowned,
7/16/03.**

Below is a list of facts about Nathan

- *He was a huge fan of monster trucks*
- *He liked to play Spiderman on his playstation*
- *He liked to do puzzles, the more pieces the better*
- *He was a little artist in the making, he could draw about anything*
- *He wanted to be a builder when he grew up, and was going to build is gammy a new house*
- *He enjoyed school and was an excellent speller*
- *He liked to ride his bike around the neighborhood and play with his friends*
- *He had a best friend, named Brandon...those 2 were always together*
- *He was a member of the Perryton Church of Christ*
- *He enjoyed our weekend trips to Indiana, and going to the Children's Museum*
- *He touched many hearts in his short 8 years of life, his smile could melt anybody's heart*
- *He collected hot wheels, he loved those cars!*
- *He liked NASCAR and his favorite driver was Dale Earnhardt Jr.*
- *Nathan was just a good kid, who was starting to become his own little person*

Nathan we love and miss you so much, you left us way too soon. Our hearts ache for you daily. You touched the hearts of many while you were here. Until we meet up again some day little bubby, I love you!!

Mommy--Syrena

Twin Sister—Brianna

Little Sister—Ryleigh

You can read more about Nathan on his website:

<http://www.geocities.com/momtonate03/>

Nathan's symbols are a black cowboy hat and hot wheels.

Rebecca Woloch's son, Jesse Higginbotham (3/10/90), died in an auto accident, 4/19/07.

Rebecca has a wonderful project she is working to memorial Jesse and others who attended Dunbar High School:

Dinah,

I am working with students at Jesse's school to install a Memorial Garden at the High School. We are making great progress and sharing a real sense of community there.

I received a list of names from the school of other students who had passed while attending school there and wanted to ask for your help. I want to contact these parents and let them know that the Memorial Garden is for ALL the students whose lives were lost and invite them to join us in its creation. We have posted information about the garden on Jesse's website: <http://jessehigginbotham.com/garden.html>

If you know of any children who have passed that attended Dunbar High School, I hope you will notify Rebecca.

Jesse's symbol is a laptop computer.

This is a specially formulated diet designed to help women cope with the stress that builds during the day.

Breakfast

- 1 grapefruit
- 1 slice whole wheat toast
- 1 cup skim milk

Lunch

- 1 small portion lean, steamed chicken
- 1 cup spinach

1 cup herbal tea
1 Hershey's kiss

Afternoon Tea

The rest of the Hershey Kisses in the bag
1 tub of Hagen-Daaz ice cream with chocolate chips

Dinner

4 glasses of wine (red or white)
2 loaves garlic bread
1 family size supreme pizza
3 Snickers Bars

Late Night Snack

1 whole Sarah Lee cheesecake (eaten directly from the freezer)

Remember: Stressed spelled backward is desserts. Send this to four women and you will lose two pounds. Send this to all the women you know (or ever knew) and you will lose 10 pounds. If you delete this message, you will gain 10 pounds immediately. That's why I had to pass this on; I didn't want to risk it.

My email address is: dinah@ucumberlands.edu
The website's address is <http://www.ucumberlands.edu/lamentations/>