

# LAMENTATIONS

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middle

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I hope you are planning to come to J.I.M.'s Conference, June 6 & 7<sup>th</sup>. You can get complete information on the web site.

Here are just two testimonials about the conference:

*I am glad to have you too, and I am so thankful for you, and to you. The summer after Scott passed that I came to my first conference was the comfort that I needed - comfort in knowing that I wasn't alone, others were hurting just like me, knowing there was support - outside of family (which sometimes is not the best support system), the sympathy that others felt and the kindness that was shown. It was what I needed so badly and for that, I thank you for making it possible. I know that this is your last year for doing the conference and it makes me so sad to know that after this year, it's over. It's sad to let go of that support line that is so vital and not know where you are going to land, where to go, or what to do next - you feel lost. Anyway, before my emotions take over, I am so glad you are having the conference - it means a lot to me as I am sure it does to everyone. I look forward to being there. Your efforts and all your work have been a divine gift to others - I pray that your life will be filled with happy memories of all those persons that you have touched with your wonderful stories, and the stories and heartfelt memories that we have shared with you of our children. I thank you and so does my child.*

*Leann J. Butler*

*I attended last year's conference and thought it was amazing. The movie took my breath away! I was so glad I went and made the effort. Dinah reached out to me via Internet, a place I felt most comfortable after Fallon's passing - I was not ready for groups nor have I ever been a group person, and I found a safe haven in her site/wings. I was able to grieve at my own pace and yet could find solace in the pages of her newsletter (and that of Karen Bauer's Compassionate Friend's newsletter). Dinah and*

*Rosemary are truly AMAZING people and ones many will learn from. They are GRACE in action.*

*I have been so fortunate to have had such tremendous role models and I continue to learn (and have been blessed) that by giving of yourself - TRULY GIVING FREELY, without expectations, you receive tenfold! Dinah and Rosemary are true examples of that.*

*I hope you have the opportunity to attend J.I.M.'S. conference - you will forever be changed!*

*Lizanne*

## **Grief Grafts**

**Louis and Lizanne McIntyre's daughter, Fallon (3-3-02), died from brain/spinal cancer, 6-21-04.**

*Dear Dinah,*

*I really enjoyed last year's conference and I'd love to attend this years since it is at Cumberland and I'd get to SEE the Children of the Dome in person... I have been without a full-time sitter since last July so it is always "hard" to get away. That being said, I of course will try my darndest to be there. I will get back to you on this.*

*You probably don't recall, but I came alone to the conference last year and pretty much stayed to myself. I needed to absorb and feel your conference firsthand because I FELT I NEEDED to be there due to all the support and care you sent me via the internet after Fallon's death. It was my sister Tiffany who somehow found your site and it was she who originally connected you to me. I am to this day so grateful for that connection (there are no accidents). I was so happy that I attended JIM'S conference and I left Kentucky feeling renewed and more alive then ever. It was as though your conference recharged my battery.*

*Emily (Laitmon) runs a bereavement group for the Westchester Bereavement Center and my contact with Emily has been mainly because of the book. Where she works they have a children's program called the Treehouse program where my daughter Aidan attended after Fallon's death - which helped her tremendously! I personally have not attended or been associated with any bereavement group(s) in my area due mainly to my nature (I do better flying solo...). We all grieve differently and find solace in different settings. That is why I found your site/newsletter/book so helpful. I, for whatever reason, have found peace immersing myself in books and other's written words/stories.*

*Big hug,*

*Lizanne*

<http://fallon.freewebsitehosting.com/>

Lizanne and Louis both wrote chapters in Emily Laitmon and Terry Toll's new book, Our Children, Our Hearts, *Journeys of Child Loss and Remembrance*.

### **Fallon's symbols are bubbles & sun.**

### **Donna Bellman's heroic son, Michael Bitz (2-14-72), was killed in Iraq, 3-23-03.**



This is Michael's story. An amazing American hero who died for us:

*It was Christmas 2002. Little did I know it would be the last time I would see my son Michael. We were so caught up in the drama of fighting with Theresa (Michael's 1st wife) so Michael could get custody of Christian that we didn't really get to enjoy each other. Although on Christmas Day Michael had asked me if I was proud of him. I exclaimed that I was...and he replied, "No, Mom...are you REALLY proud of me?" I walked up to where he was sitting, put my arms around him and said, "I AM VERY proud of you,*

*I always have been. I may not have always agreed with some of the choices you have made, but I have always loved you and have always been proud and thankful that you are my son". Tears swelled up in his beautiful blue eyes as he stood up, gave me one of his big bear hugs and walked outside. Later that day taking pictures of everyone I got a great picture of Michael and Christian together...it would be their last. To this day I am so Thankful and Grateful for the opportunity to express how much I loved him and for him to really know it.*

*Two weeks after Christmas Michael called to inform me he had received his orders to leave for Iraq on January 12, 2003. My heart sank, I had a horrible feeling that started to well up inside me and I couldn't shake it. I pleaded with him to see if he could get out of going at this time. He was in the process of a custody battle for Christian, his second wife Janina, was about to have twins and with their 2-year old son, she really had her hands full. I even asked him for his Commanding Officer's name and number so I could call and talk to him. I felt desperate this time. Michael had gone on several deployments before and I didn't worry about him, but this time was different. Then Michael's voice became very soft and low, "Mom...I have to do this, I have to go." "You will have to try to get custody of Christian." "Mom...I don't think I'll make it back this time." I knew then it was his choice to go, I also knew that he really believed he would not be returning. After getting off the phone with Michael, I immediately called my oldest son Robert. Michael had already called him and made him executor to his will. I expressed my concerns about Michael and Rob expressed the same, tears were really flowing by now, I couldn't talk anymore so I told Rob I'd call him later. Michael started calling family and friends, everyone he could get in touch with to say good-bye and to mend any hard feelings that may have not yet been mended. Since he couldn't get a hold of Theresa he wrote to her and Christian sending his love and still trying to make peace with her, but telling Christian that he didn't think he would be returning and how sorry he was and how much he loved him.*

*Michael e-mailed as much as he could while aboard ship on the way to Iraq, but that all stopped once they landed. I sent him a birthday card hoping he would receive it for his 31st birthday on 2/14/03. I later found out he never received it and it was returned to me by Janina a year or so later as everything that was sent to him was given to her. The twins were born on 2/21/03, a boy and a girl, just as Michael had hoped for and they both have the most beautiful blue eyes, again just as he hoped for. Michael was able to call Janina when the twins were born as he was chosen to do a supply run and whenever he was at the command post he made a call to his wife, but he*

*was never to see his new babies. Michael had really come into his own the last couple of years and he really loved Janina and his children with all his heart and soul. I have to attribute a lot of that to him getting back into church and receiving God in his heart and his life. The last letter I received from Michael showed concerns again about Christian and he expressed that he hoped I could get custody of Christian.*

*As time passed the terrible feeling I was having only grew. About mid March these feelings were so strong I could hardly concentrate on anything, at one point I was driving home from work one night and I suddenly yelled out "MICHAEL, SURROUND YOURSELF WITH THE WHITE LIGHT!" This outburst really surprised me. I didn't know where it came from, but it left me feeling so helpless, I wanted to protect my son and I had no way of doing that, I didn't even know where he was, all I felt was that he was in danger.*

*When President Bush declared war on Thursday March 20, 2003 I knew the time was drawing near. On Friday March 21st I was a total wreck at work and trying to get a hold of Janina to make sure Michael had all his affairs in order, but I couldn't get a hold of her on the phone. June kept telling me I was blowing this all out of proportion and that Michael probably wasn't anywhere near the fighting. The anxiety building up inside me told me otherwise. I couldn't eat nor sleep. Saturday was pretty much the same. Finally, about 3 to 4 am Sunday morning March 23rd, the tension left and I was able to sleep. When I awoke the plastic flowers that had been entwined in the curtains above my head were neatly laying next to me on the pillow. I thought it was strange and wondered how on earth would they have ever fallen. There was no way, I shrugged it off, got up and replace them in the curtain and prepared for church. That evening the news was recapping the events of the war that was going on in Iraq. They showed a truck being hit by an RPG raising it way off the ground and when it came back down it was on fire and black smoke was pouring from it. I couldn't watch anymore and I walked out of the living room.*

*Monday morning March 24th, I hadn't been at work long when James called me into his office. When I walked in June was sitting on a chair, her hands covering her face, trying to hide her tears as James was telling me I had to go home, that there were some men waiting to talk to me. I kept asking him why and what men. He finally said it was some military people to talk to me about my son Michael. That's when I knew Michael was gone. I just started backing up in his office and kept saying, "But he's my son; he's my son." James left the room stating that he would take me home. June got up to hug me. She kept repeating, "You knew, how did you know?" I just*

said, "I kept telling you I felt it." Then June left the office as well. I walked out holding onto the walls as I walked through the conference room. At one point my knees started to buckle from under me and someone lifted me back up. I looked around expecting to see James or June, but no one was there. I managed to get out to James' car and on the way home I just kept holding my hand over my mouth holding in my cries and whimpers. James kept telling me it was okay to scream or yell or cry out loud, but I couldn't.

When I got home I jotted into the house, seeing out of the corner of my eye four military personnel getting out of the car that was parked in front of the house. All too soon there was a knock on the door. As I answered the door, tears were streaming down my face. I invited them in; a Chaplain, a Captain and a 1st Sgt., the fourth person stood outside the door at attention. One of them handed me an envelope, which I immediately opened. It was a sympathy card for the loss of my son Sgt. Michael E. Bitz, Killed in Action on March 23, 2003. I paced back and forth holding my hand over my mouth, holding in my cries, holding in the screams that wanted to bellow out, trying to hear what the Military Chaplain was saying, yet I couldn't seem to focus on anything, but Michael. At one point I heard one of the men say how sorry they were and they loved him too. I asked him if he knew Michael. He replied that he didn't have the pleasure of meeting Michael; then I snapped at him asking him how could he love Michael if he didn't know him and that nobody could ever love Michael as much as I did for I was his mother, I gave birth to him and raised him. "Yes ma'm," was all that he replied with. I immediately felt bad for snapping at this gentleman, he was only trying to console me. They were all very nice, gentle, kind and were very respectful. The Military couldn't get a hold of Janina yet and had asked that I not call her until they had a chance to talk to her. I agreed. I had asked if they knew what had happened to him and they didn't have any details of his passing.

When the military men had left and after I pulled my self together, I started calling family and friends. First was Rob, then others. A little later James and June came by to bring my car and purse. I tried to talk to them, but words failed to make any sound. James said he'd come back another time and that if I needed anything, I was to call him. When I found myself alone, the emotional pain of losing Michael finally hit me, ripping through my soul; a universal pain, as though I was experiencing the pain of every woman who had ever lost a child and those who ever will was tearing through me ripping me apart.

I so needed to talk to Michael that I started writing to him, expressing all my feelings and remembering his birth, his growing up years and the man he had become. I was so proud of him; yet I already missed seeing his

*mischievous smile, his blue eyes and feeling his big bear hugs. I wrote a poem to him entitled "Message to Michael."*

*The next few weeks were hard and really tried my patience. Going back east to Camp Lejeune in North Carolina was hard. I took Christian with me for the memorial and funeral services. Sadly enough the day we got there happened to be Christian's 7th birthday. Not a very pleasant time for a little boy having a birthday and going to his father's memorial service a couple of days later. Little did I know at the time that even though Michael and Janina were only married a couple of years she had the say about everything. I was hurt that I was not consulted about any of the arrangements that were being made, after all...he was my son!*

*The day before the memorial service, we met with President and Mrs. Bush, had pictures taken with them and talked to them a few moments. I was surprised at President Bush's sincerity regarding the loss of my son, even though my 2-year old grandson hauled off and hit President Bush in the face as he walked in the door, just after Janina had picked up Joshua. Joshua tried to hit him again, but President Bush ducked and laughed while Mrs. Bush bee lined it to the twins. I had never met a woman so refined, gracious and elegant as Mrs. Bush. It was a pleasure meeting them.*

*After lunch we found out that they couldn't release Michael's body from Dover Air Force Base, as it hadn't had the DNA testing done. I felt hurt once again that I would not be able to attend a funeral for Michael. Since we had a lot of family that had flown in from all over the country, it was decided just to have a memorial service. The military hadn't started on anything and the service was to be the next morning. I didn't even know what the brochure for the service was going to say. Janina kept her distance through most of all of this and I didn't understand why or what was going on with her. When Michael was alive she was a different person. Now she was distant, cold and acted as though Michael had no family but her and their children. I was bewildered!*

*The next day at the memorial service I almost came unglued and walked out of the service. The photograph used for the service was tacky. On the back of the memorial service brochure was a list of survivors. Michael's dad's name and his two children from another marriage were listed as survivors. Michael's dad never had anything to do with the boys and wanted to have us killed so he wouldn't have to pay for child support and threatened to do so several times since Michael's birth until our divorce. I never pressed for child support, I just wanted him out of our lives. I never wanted him to know where we were for fear of our safety. I paid for our divorce going through a lawyer who did not divulge our location. He hadn't even*

*seen Michael since Michael was 1½ -years old. Their dad had never seen Steven, because I was 3 months pregnant with him at the time of our separation. I was finally able to get a divorce just before Steven turned a year old after I found out that their father had gotten out of prison after serving several months time – why he went to prison, I don't know nor did I care. I was furious that they would even mention people who were never in Michael's life. Janina did not know what she had done or did she? She could have asked me about his father and if it would be appropriate to list them. However, out of respect for Michael, I bit my tongue. But they might as well have just stabbed me in the heart then and gotten it over with; instead they just kept turning the knife with all the events that followed for several months. I later found out that their dad had divorced again, but hadn't seen or contacted his other two children in over 6 years even though he lives 5 miles from them, nor had he ever paid child support to his second wife – go figure!*

*I was so hurt that I didn't get to have a funeral for Michael and having to go back to California, I wouldn't even be able to attend it when they finally did receive his body. Sunday was our flight home, but our flight was cancelled in Charlotte and Christian and I were put up in a hotel. Little did I know at the time the military flew Michael's body over Charlotte between 10 and 11pm that night!*

*Back in California I was checking into proceedings to get custody of Christian. Then in June, an opportunity presented itself and I took it. I was able to get temporary custody with a hearing for permanent custody scheduled in September and a restraining order against Theresa in place until the September hearing. I had a short time to get everything ready. I was thankful for this busy time as it kept me from dealing with Michael's passing...at least during the day when I was taking care of Christian. My nights were spent soaking my pillow trying desperately to understand it all. In September at the hearing I was granted permanent guardian of Christian.*

*Christian needed a lot of help. He was a physical, mental and emotional wreck. He had just ended the 1st grade and he couldn't read, write or do much math. At the beginning of 2nd grade he tested a year and a half below grade level. I needed to get him up to speed so we really worked, and by the end of the second grade he was A's and B's and had received several awards; 3rd and 4th grade the same with awards being presented to him at each quarter. At the end of his 5th year and at graduation from grade school he was awarded a Presidential Award for Outstanding Academic Achievement and Leadership Abilities signed by President Bush. He is a completely different person than when I first took custody of him. Everybody*

*remarked how they couldn't get over the change in him. He has confidence and assurance about himself now. I'm so proud of him, he has worked very hard to get where he is now. He has also been accepted into a Magnet school for 6th through 8th grade. It is such a joy to be a big part of his life and to watch him grow up. He looks, acts and has much of his father's personality that many times I watch him and it's De ja vu. Yet at times it's sad because I see him growing up too fast and I will miss him dearly when it's time for him to make his own way living his own life.*

*By the end of the summer in 2003 I tried feverishly to find out what happened to Michael that day. Nobody would tell me anything and Janina kept telling me she knew but she wasn't ready to talk about it. A couple of years later it was revealed that she didn't know anymore than I did. I couldn't leave it alone, finally I was given the name and number to Marine Headquarters in Washington DC. I called and talked to a General (the name escapes me) who got me in touch with Captain Blanchard (now Major Blanchard), who just happened to be there, but in a different company when Michael was killed. Captain Blanchard set up a meeting for Rob, Christian and I to talk to some of the marines that were with Michael when he was killed. The meeting was set up to take place the day before Thanksgiving. I was nervous and excited at the same time. I was finally going to find out what happened that day. Several months later I received a 900 page investigative report from Captain Blanchard done by the military that confirmed what was said at the meeting, which I will discuss momentarily.*

*After Michael's passing, I received numerous letters, cards, gifts and one of the packages I received was from Rosemary Smith. I read her book and called her to thank her for her kindness. I felt she understood what I was going through. During the course of a few months I had been talking with her when one day she called to discuss with me about a documentary they were talking about putting together regarding parents who have lost children and asked me if I would do an interview for it. I agreed. I told her I would be in North Carolina on base to have a meeting with some of the Marines who were with Michael in Iraq during Thanksgiving week. They set it up and got permission from Camp Lejeune to film an interview with me and to film Christian receiving a shadow box of Michael's medals from Captain Blanchard. We were the first ones filmed for the documentary. I didn't know how it would go especially being filmed just after the meeting with the marines. It was a very intense time. I was still very much in my grief and had been crying a lot during the meeting. But I got through it.*

*Christian and I flew out to Florida on Saturday then Rob, Christian and I drove up to North Carolina on Tuesday November 25, 2003 to meet*

*Captain Blanchard at the gate so we could get a pass to get on and off base during our stay. Captain Blanchard fixed us up at the Officer's quarters, which were very nice accommodations. Captain Blanchard expressed that he wasn't sure how many men would show up to talk to us as most of the men Michael was with have been transferred or are gone for the holidays and none would show up if Janina was going to be there. I assured him that Janina wouldn't be there, that this meeting was for us and told him it didn't matter how many guys were there, just so we could find out what happened that day. After Captain Blanchard left we went to see Janina and the children briefly. We didn't understand why no one wanted Janina there and we weren't told anything at that time. But after spending a few minutes with Janina, Rob and I both felt something was going on that Janina didn't want us to know about. It was good to see the children, my how much they have grown. We didn't stay long and headed back to the base to get a good night's sleep before the meeting the next morning.*

*Wednesday November 26, 2003. By the time we dressed and ate breakfast, Captain Blanchard was there to escort us over to the meeting. When we drove up...my first thought was "How ironic...this is the same building where we had Michael's reception after the memorial service." As Christian and I walked up to the building, I became very nervous. We couldn't see into the windows from the outside, but it looked like nobody was around. I started to panic thinking that maybe nobody showed up and this was a wasted trip. I paused at the door waiting for Rob and Captain Blanchard to get closer before I opened it to walk in. Stepping into the building I was struck in awe at the number of marines standing at attention waiting for us – there were 30 to 40 men. I felt honored to be among these wonderful men. The energy of the room catches your breath and moments seem like an eternity. When Captain Blanchard and Rob walked in, greetings were exchanged and we all filed into a bigger conference area.*

*When everyone was seated, each person in turn going around the room stated their name and rank. I had asked first what was Michael doing and how was he feeling, what was his mental status on the way over and before that day. There were several men who exclaimed that Michael had saved their lives and others he had saved either were still in the hospital or had transferred to another base. Several men talked about how Michael was a hands-on type of Sgt. He would never demand anything of his men that he wouldn't do himself. They said unlike other Sergeants, Michael would get right in and help his men get the job done that needed to be done and that he was always looking out after other fellow Marines. They said before the war started he would hold talks and Bible discussions in the back of tracks,*

*doing whatever he could to keep up morale. If Michael saw someone off by himself, he would go sit down beside him, talking to them and bringing him back into the group. They said Michael always had a smile on, kidding around with everyone and laughing. They were saying that Michael was always upbeat and always wanting to learn more and working very hard and of course Michael loved to eat...boy did he eat! But he was very muscular and very fit...no fat on him!*

*There was some resistance to talk about what happened and I understood that because I knew the events of that day were still under investigation. Jumping ahead a little bit but between this meeting; a book called "An Nasiriyah The Fight for the Bridges" and a 900 page Military report of the events that day that Captain Blanchard brought to me in California a few months later, this is basically what happened:*

*March 23, 2003. The order was received to take the two bridges in An Nasiriyah. There were 3 companies of men - Alpha, Bravo and Charlie and were preparing the gear and weapons for war. Michael was assigned to Charlie Company. The tanks were fueled up to go in front of the companies and clear the way of Saddam's regime. However, the call came through that a supply convoy had made a wrong turn and were under attack. This turned out to be the Jessica Lynch group. The tanks were ordered to go help them. By the time the tanks returned it was getting late and the tanks had to go back to the end of the convoy to refuel. They received the order to proceed without the tanks. With fighting all around them Alpha Company moved ahead taking the southern bridge on the Euphrates River and securing both sides of the bridge. Companies Bravo and Charlie proceeded to the second bridge. Charlie Company bringing up the rear but was to stay close enough behind to follow Bravo either through the city or around it, depending on the amount of civilians in the area. Bravo got too far ahead and decided to detour around the city and then got stuck in sand between buildings and lost radio contact with Charlie and Alpha Company, but doing everything they could to get their vehicles out of the mud to help Charlie Company when they heard them being attacked. Charlie Company not seeing Bravo detour to the east to go around the city assumed Bravo continued straight ahead through the city to the northern bridge – Saddam Canal Bridge and followed suit. With some of the tracks breaking down the men took their equipment doubled up in the some of the other tracks. The track Michael was driving had packed in 25-26 men on top of each other. They crossed the Euphrates River Bridges noticing Alpha Company still under heavy fire. Charlie Company continued heading into the city through Ambush Alley heading toward the Saddam Canal Bridge. The Iraqis were waiving white flags as if*

*to surrender then all hell broke loose. Their convoy came under attack from rooftops, street corners and hidden posts. Continuing on through the city Charlie Company was being hit with intense arms fire and rocket propelled grenades. Since the Iraqi's weren't wearing military uniforms it was hard for the Marines to tell who were the enemy and who were civilians, especially when the enemy were using women and children as shields. Sgt. Michael E. Bitz was driving the sixth track in line under 2nd Lt. Michael Seely's command. Charlie Company was almost through Ambush Alley and to the Saddam Canal Bridge without anyone getting hurt until Michael's track was hit with an RPG. Several marines were wounded and one of the anti-tank rockets inside the vehicle ignited lifting the track in the air (this was what was showing on the news that I saw and walked away from; I didn't know it was Michael's track I just knew I couldn't watch it anymore). They described a white flash and the track was on fire filling the inside with black smoke. Among the dark smoke filled track the marines checked for wounds on themselves and then on others, quickly attending to the wounded. One marine was blown out of the track from the explosion and lying on top wounded. Another marine pulled him back into the track to get him away from the attacks they were still under. Another marine's foot had been blown apart by the explosion and hanging by pieces of skin and tendons. Another marine lost his sight. Michael was wounded from the explosion, but was still going strong. Michael was ordered to keep the track moving north with the rest of the convoy. The outside of the track was on fire as well. As he coaxed the track forward flames were bursting from the rear hatch of the track. Some of the marines would stand up through the hatch just to get some air to breathe returning fire at the same time. Michael finally got his crippled track across to the north side of the bridge and to a stop. The latch was stuck on the back ramp of the track and wouldn't open. Michael crawled out through the top under gun fire went around the back and opened the back ramp and started pulling the marines out of the track to safety. Michael was carrying an injured Marine to cover when a shell exploded near them and sprayed Michael with shrapnel all over the back of his head, back and legs. Blood started streaming from his face and back as he continued carrying the wounded Marine to safety. I was told that Michael must have been running on pure adrenalin, because he acted as if nothing was wrong. While medics were attending to the wounds of others, Iraqi's were honing in on the damaged track blowing it up, setting off the spare ammunition left inside. Michael picked up a firearm and starting running around helping where he could and taking ammo to those who needed it.*

*Then someone called in the A-10 fighters and all of a sudden Charlie Company was taking hits from both the Iraqis and our own Air Force. The fighter pilot did not know Charlie Company was in the middle of the fighting. After over three hours of fighting, Charlie Company was getting too many casualties and Sgt. Schaefer decided to try to get the wounded back through Ambush Alley and head back to Alpha Company. More men were being killed as they were loading the wounded into the remaining tracks. Michael helped load up some of the wounded then walked into one of the tracks himself. By this time I was told that Michael was losing it. He had lost a lot of blood and was beginning to babble. As the convoy started back through Ambush Alley with approximately 80-90 marines, leaving over a hundred left to hold the bridge on the north side, one of the tracks loaded with wounded was hit killing everyone inside. Now, Charlie Company was down to 5 tracks and Michael was in one of them. Then another track was hit ripping the track in half. A third track from the back of the convoy was hit killing Michael. The driver of this track managed to keep the track moving with the other three going south. The fighting continued and still continues today. But I now knew what happened to my son that day.*

*The meeting that day with those Marines was very intense. There was a lot of crying on my part, but so thankful for the information. Everyone was so nice. I told some stories about Michael's growing up years and passed around a senior picture I've always carried around with me. I had been asked how I was informed of his death and I told them. Three-four hours had passed by now and we were closing the meeting. Captain Blanchard had presented Christian with a shadow box of the medals Michael had received thus far. The meeting broke up and then I did the interview with Chip and Ann. I had been crying so much I was worried how I did on the interview, but was reassured that everything was all right.*

*After lunch we drove back over to Janina's house to visit a little before we headed back to Florida. She expressed being hurt because she wasn't invited to attend the meeting. We told her what we found out about Michael and left it at that, we didn't let her know that Michael's comrades refused to talk to us if she was there. She took us to see the house she was having built. It was going to be really nice for them. We said our good-byes and we headed back to Florida. The drive back seemed so much longer than the drive up. I guess I was just really tired. Rob and I discussed the events of the day and how intense it was...and wondered what Janina was hiding.*

*Thanksgiving was pleasant and quiet, it was also my birthday. I was so thankful to now know what happened and to hear the men speak so highly of Michael. A few days later I received e-mail from the mother of a good*

*marine friend of Michael's telling me why fellow marines wouldn't have anything to do with Janina. Then a couple weeks later I received information from Janina that she was getting married on her birthday - January 28, 2004. It was pretty ironic that Janina met her new husband the same way she met Michael and that he is in the Marines and...his name is Michael! Since her marriage to her new husband, Janina has been more understanding, helpful and caring...she became a different person, a much happier person, which meant the children would be happier and well taken care of.*

*In September 2004 the church (my) Michael and Janina were members of, flew Christian and me back to North Carolina to attend a Silver Star Award being presented for (my) Michael. This church was building a new church and the hall was being named after Michael. I met Janina's new husband for the first time and was very impressed with him. I knew that he would love, honor and take good care of Janina and the children. It was also a time when Janina just found out she was pregnant. The Silver Star Award ceremony was wonderful and I am very thankful that Janina allowed me to be a part of it. I received the Silver Star and Janina received the Citation for it. But we all have copies of both. Christian was once again presented with an updated shadow box of several more medals Michael had received.*

*This is what the Silver Star Citation says:*

*For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action against the enemy while serving as Crew Chief and Assistant Section Leader, 3d Assault Amphibian Vehicle Section, Company C, 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, Task Force TARAWA, I Marine Expeditionary Force during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM on 23 March 2003. During the attack on A Nasiriyah, Iraq, and Sergeant Bitz' vehicle sustained a direct hit from a rocket-propelled grenade, setting it on fire. Aware that there were several casualties on board, he maneuvered his vehicle to the Company's defensive perimeter. He immediately assisted in moving the wounded to the casualty collection point. Without an amphibious assault vehicle to command and under unrelenting enemy small arms and artillery fire, he picked up his rifle and joined a squad of 3d Platoon and after the squad sustained several casualties, Sergeant Bitz ignored his own wounds and helped in loading the others onto an evacuation vehicle. Despite receiving unrelenting fire, Sergeant Bitz mounted a different vehicle to provide security for the casualties. While escorting the wounded during movement, Sergeant Bitz was mortally wounded by enemy fire when his vehicle sustained a direct hit from a rocket-*

*propelled grenade. By his outstanding display of decisive leadership, unlimited courage in the face of heavy enemy fire, and utmost devotion to duty, Sergeant Bitz reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.*

*In October 2006 the military flew us back to North Carolina for a dedication ceremony because Camp Lejeune built a middle school and named it after Michael. That was truly an awesome ceremony and the school is huge, much bigger than I ever imagined it to be. We were given a private tour of the school after the ceremony. It's pretty incredible. It's like no school I've ever been in. All the sidewalks leading up to the school have alligators painted on them (the alligator was the symbol for Michael's unit). At the front door are two huge mats that have a big alligator with children climbing on it entitled Bitz Gators. There are three wings going off the main building one each for 3rd, 4th and 5th grades and on each hallway is a name such as a street name i.e. Alligator Zing, Alligator Alley. There are big stuffed alligators in the halls and a huge display in the front about Michael. They have a big computer room, big library, and a huge art room with a kiln room off to the side. There are computers in every classroom; the gym and cafeteria rooms are huge. The school is incredible; one would have to see it to get the full picture.*

*Major Blanchard flew in with his wife. Many of Michael's comrades came for the dedication. It was good to see them again. My dad was trying to catch a flight in Phoenix, AZ and was bumped off the flight being very irritated about it until we were seated at the ceremony and he happened to look up and there was the marine who bumped him from the flight standing in formation. The Marine was trying to get to the ceremony in honor of Michael. I was so glad Rob was able to attend. One Marine spoke very highly of Michael telling of a time when he was first assigned to Michael's unit. This Marine was a medic, but Michael insisted he would learn how to drive a track and had him up at 3 am every morning until he learned to drive one. He laughs about it now and expressed that he is probably the only Marine medic that knows how to drive a track. He also told of how he was trying to pass a rescue swim class and was continuing to fail it until Michael found out about it and worked with him showing him how to pass the class and the proper swimming techniques to use. He finally did pass the class thanks to Michael and was very grateful for Michael's help.*

*Since Michael's departure from the physical world, I have read countless books, talked to different mediums including John Edwards of Crossing Over, regarding Michael. I have felt Michael's presence many*

*times and I know he watches over us protecting us. There are times when the lights in the room we are in will flicker, but no other room. I know it is Michael saying hello. One medium told me that the last thing Michael remembers was that his tongue and face were going numb and he was trying to talk but couldn't. Now I know he wasn't losing it as what was thought. He couldn't talk because his tongue was numb from the wounds he had sustained. I have learned that WE never die, we may lose our body, but WE never die and that we choose when to cross over after what we came here to accomplish has been completed. I believe Michael's purpose was to learn and experience Love, Honor and Courage - which he did with all his heart, mind, body and soul.*

*Raising Christian has been very rewarding to me. Christian's mother, Theresa is a different person now as she continues to improve her life and has been living with Christian and me for the past couple of years even though I continue to be Christian's guardian and make all the decisions regarding him. However, he needs me at home, so I've started making candles and painting art pieces to subsidize my income to help me raise him. The candles are 100% soy and very healthy. Every thing is handmade/hand poured/hand painted and custom ordered.*

Donna is in the documentary "Space Between Breaths."

## **Message to Michael**

Michael, you left us as a hero today,  
For God called you home to stay.  
My young warrior, my hero, my son,  
Engaged in the fight for Iraqi's freedom.

Saddam's regime could not have known,  
You had children at home.  
Christian now seven, and Joshua just two,  
Caleb and Taylor, the newborn twins,  
Will never get to know you.  
Now, as an angel of light,  
You have become their guardian tonight,  
Watching over them each day and night.

Michael, you left us as a hero today,  
For God called you home to stay.  
My young warrior, my hero, my son,  
Engaged in the fight for Iraqi's freedom.

When I felt your life near its end,  
Tension and worry became an unwanted friend.  
The bubble of light I envisioned you in,  
Wasn't enough to shield you with.  
Your mission in this life was complete,  
Therefore, God brought you home to meet,  
Relatives and friends who have gone before,  
So they could meet you at the veiled door.

Michael, you left us as a hero today,  
For God called you home to stay.  
My young warrior, my hero, my son,  
Engaged in the fight for Iraqi's freedom.

My heart heavy with sorrow,  
With tears falling into tomorrow.  
The emotional pain that ripped through my soul,  
Is far greater than you'll ever know.  
The loss I feel, I fear will never heal,  
As the memories of you, turn in my mind like a wheel.  
Know that my love for you will always remain,  
Know that your life was not in vain.

You are honored as an American Hero!

Donna M. Bellman

If you are interested in seeing any of the candles, etc. you can view them at [Donna Bellman's Web Site](#) and email her at [bellman52@msn.com](mailto:bellman52@msn.com)

**Michael symbolizes honor and courage.**

**Steve & Emily (Laitmon) Marcus' son, Daniel (2-6-85), died from a combination of asthma & anaphylactic shock from cooking fumes, 1-27-98.**

Emily and Steve wrote about Daniel's life in first person:

Emily Laitmon & Steve Marcus

***My Story***

*By Dan the Man Marcus; January 27, 1998*

*So, like everyone else I was born. It was February 6, 1985. But my birth mother was too young to take care of me so she had to give me up. I think that*

*was very hard for her. I think she really cried a whole lot. I never got to meet her again but sometimes I wondered what she was really like. Was she like me? I guess I'll never know.*

*The people who adopted me couldn't have their own baby. When I was older they told me about my adoption. Get this! They told me they wrapped me in a big warm red blanket when they got me at the hospital because they forgot to bring clothes. Not a good start, but I still have that blanket. I have a kinda funny good feeling when I see it. And then on the way home they stopped for pizza. That part sounded pretty cool to me since I'm a pizza freak. They also told me that they tried many things to have a baby that didn't work. Isn't that silly? My birth mother did it so easy. I guess some people are luckier than other people. But you know what happened? Take one guess.*

*Wrong!*

*When they were adopting me, my new mother all of a sudden could have a baby. She called it IVF. So she had two babies, me and my sister Rebecca. But I was here first! I never let Rebecca forget that. I was six months older. The big brother.*

*We used to live in this big building in New York City on the 26th floor. I lived there till I was about 6 years old and then we moved out of the city. I don't remember a lot about things back then. But I got to keep the bunk beds we used to sleep in. They are in my room. So when I have friends sleep over, I sleep on the top and they sleep on the bottom.*

*I remember when we lived in the city I used to play in the back. I had friends from my nursery school. And on weekends we would go to our country house. It had a million acres and a big lake and a tree where I could swing from a rope. When it snowed, boy it was so much fun. The snow was over my head. But my Mom and Dad had to sell our country house when we moved out of the city. I think I really miss it and I wish they never sold it.*

*We moved to a place called Larchmont and I went to school called Murray. Do you know why it was called Murray? It was called Murray because it was on Murray Avenue...duh! I liked school a whole lot. You know I really like being a kid. If I could be a kid forever, why not!*

*My favorite subjects were always math and science. I like puzzles and figuring things out. I could do puzzles that no one else could do. But the biggest thing that ever happened to me was when I learned to like computers. My uncle showed me a lot 'cause my Dad didn't know too much. Then I learned everything else by myself. I would spend hours on the computer playing games. And then the second biggest thing happened. We got on-line. That was fantastic. I talked to all my friends and even met people from Florida. I got a secret, but I'll tell you anyway. When I was on-line I was really funny and nice to people. I think it is the realer me.*

*But hey, I forgot a bunch of other stuff I like. I like soccer. I got lots of trophies. I really like baseball. I can even throw a curve ball and my uncle says his hand hurts when he catches my pitches. My other uncle also likes the Yankees. I want to go to a game with him. I like magic. I can make a quarter disappear. I can spend it. That's a joke folks, so laugh.*

*I like woodworking. My aunt showed me some neat things. She even has a web site with her stuff. I like building things. I built this big roller coaster. I get along real well with my cousin because he likes building things also. He is a Lego maniac.*

*I once tried to like playing music. One of my Mom's friends showed me how to play the sax. He was cool, but I couldn't blow hard enough to make a big sound.*

*Every summer, well most summers, I went to summer camp in New Hampshire. It was okay but I missed home a lot. I like the hiking best. I hated the food most. My counselors were great. I even had one from New Orleans. In the winter we went skiing. Last year we went to Steamboat Springs and I skied in powder. I love Steamboat. I want to go back. Maybe someday.*

*We used go on fun family trips. We went to Yosemite, Disney World, and Club Med in Mexico. I even went on a water thing there that went so fast it scared me.*

*But something always bugged me. I had asthma. Sometimes it was hard to breathe so I had to use medicine I could inhale. I hated that so much. The worst thing was an asthma attack. Made me feel like I could never breathe again. But I always did. Until just one time.*

*Some other things about me. I like helping smaller kids. I taught the kid across the street to ride his bike. I love all animals. We had fish and we had gerbils, Snowy and Soxie, and now we have a rabbit named Snuffles. Well, it's my sister's rabbit. Cats make me sneeze because of my allergies. So, no cat.*

*My favorite baseball team is the Yankees. Man was I angry when they got killed in the first game of the World Series against Atlanta. I threw a pillow at the television (Yeah, sometimes I have a bad temper. So who is perfect?).*

*My favorite food is candy. After candy I like more candy. And after more candy I like Cinnamon Toast Crunch for breakfast. My favorite drink is Pepsi and root beer. Pizza is great. And I can eat spaghetti all the time. Ragu rules!*

*I go to a middle school now. I still like science and the teachers even ask me to help them with their computers. When I grow up, my ambition is to have a job testing computer games. But maybe I will be a scientist also. I like mysteries and puzzles like scientists.*

*Well, that's me. And even though you can't hug me or kiss me right now anymore, you can always leave me a message. We have super computers up here on [Orion](#). I am on-line with a billion planets. The biggest chat room ever.*

*And we laugh all the time. But I do miss you all. My parents wanted me to ask you to help find ways to stop asthma and other diseases from taking away children. If I was back with you and it was my friend who was gone, I would do it for sure.*

*That's about it. My life was great. Love to you all. Special love to my family and close friends and my on-line buddies. Look for me at night in Orion. I blink a lot to show you I'm still here and I love you all.  
Da bomb diggity and dats wack!!!*

Read more about Daniel and the Daniel Marcus Memorial Fund on his web site: [www.hellodaniel.com](http://www.hellodaniel.com)

Emily and Terry Toll have written the book, Our Children, Our Hearts, *Journeys of Child Loss and Remembrance*. This is the description that is on the jacket:

*Many parents go speechless when faced with the thought of losing a child. What words could possibly describe the fear, anxiety, agony, and grief associated with such a loss?*

*When Emily Laitmon asked members of her Child Loss Support Group to spell out their feelings, they exploded with ideas. Their outpourings led to "Our Children, Our Hearts," a collection of essays about 25 children who died much too young, and about the ways their loved ones grieve and remember them.*

*With passion, rage, longing, sorrow, humor, and hope, writers memorialize their children. They describe their personal struggles with loss, and the solace to be found with other grieving parents. On these journeys we meet mothers, fathers, couples, and also siblings from many walks of life and faiths. For some, bereavement is recent. For others, the loss began 10, or even 30 years ago.*

*Grief steals like a thief, and makes the heart a lonely hunter. But as these essays show, grief shared is grief diminished. Getting through its maze changes you forever. But death does not end your relationship with your child. Memorial candles, plaques, poems, scholarships, websites, and acts of loving kindness are a few of the tools with which families who lose a child, keep them in their hearts forever.*

Learn more about the book and ordering on this web site:  
[www.ourchildren-ourhearts.org](http://www.ourchildren-ourhearts.org)

Learn more about the Bereavement Center which has so many helpful services to all who are grieving: [www.thebereavementcenter.org](http://www.thebereavementcenter.org)

**Daniel's symbol is Orion.**

**Dave & Jean Luckhaupt's son, Greg (3-10-53), died from cancer, 2-6-94.**

They tell of their son's great talent:

*Dear Dinah,*

*Thank you so much for keeping in touch. We have been negligent and we apologize.*

*Greg would be 55 years old next week. He's been gone 14 years. We miss him so much. Sometimes his death just doesn't seem real. A day does not pass that we don't think of him.*

*Greg was a very kind and caring person. He loved music and had 2 degrees in music education and music performance. One from OSU and the other from Loyola University in Chicago. He taught and played many instruments. His majors were in piano and organ. He was the organist in many churches in the Columbus and Chicago areas.*

*Although he lived in Chicago after his graduation, he still visited us often.*

*Greg had many friends—everyone loved him.*

*Greg's grave is very close to us – (10 minutes away) and we visit often.*

*Thank you for remembering Greg's birthday. We appreciate your kindness. (If I have your email address, I send a message on your child's birthday)*

*Fondly,*

*Dave & Jean Luckhaupt*

**Greg's symbol is a musical clef.**

**Stephen Ramsey & Robin Ramsay's sons, Michael (5-2-87), and Samuel (6-25-89) were killed in an auto accident, 11-15-06.**



**Fred & Julia Schroeder's daughter, Angie (3-15-78), died from an accidental overdose, 12-23-99.**

I had sent Fred & Julia an email on Angie's birth date and this was Julia's response:

*Thanks Dinah,*

*Doing well today, my thoughts have been with Angie, but my heart is not heavy. I hope that makes sense.*

*Take care and keep smiling!*

*Julia*

I asked Julia if she had written about Angie's life and she sent this amazing story. Please read all attachments about Angie's life story and this viola:

*Dinah...*

*Attached is a letter (Story.doc) I wrote in 2003, about Angie's life, to the family who had purchased Angie's Viola*

*Julia*



Story.doc



Letter & viola.doc

*Later the DeCroix family took their daughter to Germany, they located the town in which the viola had been made. We, Sally and I did not know if they'd be interested in any history of viola ... Sally took copies of these documents with her.*

*Julia*



Transaction made in Heaven.doc



Bio.doc

**Angie's symbol is a viola.**

**Joyce Campbell's granddaughter, Lauren Walker (12-12-90), died in an auto accident, 4-16-00.**

*I have finished making her 8th anniversary page <http://angelsforlauren.com/8years.html> So hard to believe it's been this long. We still miss her incredibly!!!*

*Love,  
Joyce*

**Lauren's symbol is an angel.**

**Clinton & Monika Hedglin's son, Josh (9-13-78), died from mishandling a gun, 3-16-97.**

Monika has a new web site for Josh and a beautiful web site where you may want to add your child's name:

*"And if it all falls apart, I will know deep in my heart, the only dream that mattered had come true. In this life, I was loved by you."*

<http://www.joshuahedglin.com>

*Are you a bereaved parent? Need some support?*

<http://iam.homewithgod.com/angeljeh/index.html>

*Listen with your heart you can hear our angel sing*

**Josh's symbol is a cardinal.**

**Pam Taylor's daughter, Kelli Laine Lewis (7-18-82), was a passenger in a drunk-driving accident, 1-21-01.**

Pam shares an angel story:

*Hi Dinah :)*

*I had to tell you this angel story real quick because it involves you & my angel (with a slightly tilted halo) Kelli Laine Lewis.*

*Kelli is my daughter (killed in 01 in a drunk-driving crash). You always send myself & Kelli's grandmother (Dr Thelma White) a card on Kelli's angelversary. THANK YOU!*

*So this year I received my card from you, which is just lovely and so appreciated! We live in south Carolina. My mother in Ohio, received hers from you and forwarded it to me. So she calls me and tells me to look at the postmark.*

*Now I know you live in Kentucky, however the card came postmarked from Fort Myers, Florida and you had found a penny (one of Kelli's signs) and included it with the card.*

*Are you ready for all this? Kelli, was born in Fort Myers, grew up in Ohio and then died in South Carolina - the exact same path the mail took, & with that penny inside, we are positive it's a 'Kelli wink' ;) so thank you, angel on earth Dinah Taylor!*

*Much love & gratitude*

*Pam Taylor*

*~still Kelli's mommy*

*kelli just got a comment on her web site from Dr. Dre!*

*\*huge hip hop artist\**

I hope you will look at Kelli's myspace and see the many things that have been done in her memory: [www.myspace.com/kelli\\_laine\\_doa](http://www.myspace.com/kelli_laine_doa)

This is from Kelli's myspace. Pam has made a film "Grave Decisions." You may want to order it for your school, church, etc.:

*I was sittin' in the front passenger seat. Me, Jason & Tommy didn't make it. Three families got the "knock at the door" that night. if ya want to see a movie (my friends & fam are in it!) 'bout this night & other kids like us... call the South Carolina Prosecution office @ 803-343-0765 (not that anyone got prosecuted- ..and this is my mom speaking- as she has veto power on my page- darn her!... but no one gave a crap about our deaths) so the least they can do is send "GRAVE DECISIONS" to ya 4 phree!!!*

*UPDATE- too many people were asking for the movie- so now they will only send it to an "agency" or school-*

**Kelli's symbols are a pixie, fairy, and pennies.**

**Ron & Maria Faller's son, Christopher (5-7-90), died from viral complications from piggyback heart transplant, 3-24-98.**

I received this email from Maria telling about new web sites for Christopher. Maria has also made many web sites for other parents:

*I appreciate all of the good thoughts and gifts sent to me lately in honor of my Angel Christopher's upcoming heaven day. Please bear with me as this has been a very difficult time for me this year. It is Christopher's 10th year in heaven, it is the day after Easter, and Christopher would be 18 years old this year and should be graduating from high school and making plans for college. For more than a year now, we have been receiving in the mail all kinds of college brochures and military recruitment info addressed to Christopher. It makes me feel so sad, but I am saving them all, if that makes any sense at all. anyway, I just wanted to let everyone know why I have not been around much lately, I am just having a tough time with everything all at once. But I did manage to update Christopher's web pages for his heaven day, you can visit them here –*

*<http://www.geocities.com/legobeaverchris/chrisannivnew.html> and also <http://www.geocities.com/legobeaverchris/chrisanniv2.html>*

*I've also updated Christopher's main page if you want to visit at <http://www.geocities.com/legobeaver/index.html>*

*And Christopher's page of gifts has also been updated <http://www.geocities.com/legobeaverchris3/chrisgifts.html>*

I emailed Maria to see if I could print her email in the newsletter and said that I hoped something very special would happen on Monday (Christopher's angel date) that would let her know that he was with them:

Maria sent this email in return:

*Dear Dinah –*

*I also wanted to thank you for the wonderful card that you mailed to me, and for including the 2 hearts in the card. That seems like a sign to me as well. I didn't see anything in the clouds, but I did have a sort of a sign that has to do with the song that I have playing on Christopher's page of gifts. Angel Kenny's mom sent me a beautiful gift to add to Christopher's web page and she had this song playing while she was making the gift for Christopher. It touched her so much that she decided to send the song to me*

as well, along with the gift. It turns out that it is the very same song that I have playing on Christopher's page of gifts, which I had not yet sent to her. The song is "Not A Day Goes By" performed by the group Lonestar. After I emailed her and let her know about the same song playing on this web page, she emailed me back and wrote this –

*I think that is truly a sign... It's funny whenever I'm working in psp I listen to music, but while I was in there working with ^Christopher^ this song kept playing over & over (usually it will go to the next song automatically), I have sent some songs out to Moms with a tag but this time I felt like ^Christopher^ really wanted THAT song sent to YOU!!! Thank You so much for telling me :) Your Angel ^Christopher^ is a very strong spirit that is with You Always!!!*

*My daughter & niece were here when the song kept playing and they even said "Wow, I think that baby wants that song" my daughter said, My niece said "He is a Beautiful boy, He sure likes this song doesn't he?"*

*My daughter then said "He is truly Beautiful!!! What is his name?" when I told my daughter "Christopher" she said "WOW Ma, Kenny always said when he has a son he wanted to name him Christopher Randall and that is how Kenny wanted to spell "Christopher" too, I bet they are together up there listening to the song" (she was amazed that your ^Christopher's^ name was spelled the same as Kenny always wanted it & that "Ronald" is so close to "Randall" with the C.R.)*

Kenny's web site is: <http://memoriesofkenny.homestead.com/index.html>

**Christopher's symbols are Legos, beavers and 2 hearts intertwined.**

**Cathy Keogh's son, Kenny (1-23-82), was hit by an auto, 8-7-99.**

I had emailed Cathy to get permission to use the email she had sent to Maria. This was her response:

Dear Dinah,

*It was so AMAZING To me what happened with the song "Not A Day Goes By" when I was creating ^Christopher's^ tag for Maria. I still can't get over it, He is a very strong & loving Spirit, He sure wanted his Mom to listen to that song!!!! I always listen to music while making a tag for another parent, so that was not unusual, BUT the fact that THAT song just kept playing Over & Over again, That Never Happens...My player just usually goes to the next song (But that one time It was staying on That One Song over & over again).*

*Thank You so much for including my son ^Kenny^ on your precious angel ^Jim's^ website...I would be so honored for you to put Anything from me (or from my site to ^Kenny^) that you want, Always.*

*There are so many symbols that represent Kenny, but I would have to say Butterflies...Because around in 2000 Kenny would have turned 18 and although I've seen many other things that stand out, a rose bush that only bloomed once a year (in May) but after Kenny passed in August 99 it bloomed right after Kenny's funeral on August 12th and remained blooming till Oct.(Halloween) and Never bloomed again EVER after that, Or the week after I lost Kenny (Kenny left me on Aug.7th, 99) on Aug. 14, I was walking his dog Mystick and decided to bring the dog into the back yard to let her run around like Kenny always did and she went right over to a Lilac bush and sat down, I thought hmmm I guess she is tired but when I looked just above her head there was a humming bird (I never in my whole life Ever saw a real humming bird b4 or since that day) and last summer I felt like Kenny wasn't showing me too many signs anymore, but all summer long there were so many Dragon Flies...*

*THEN One came right up to my face and just hovered there for a whole minute, My friend was shocked, I was thrilled and just said "Thank You Kenny, Now I know you Are Still with me" ...But the butterflies are very special because They really come so often, And All colors during the summer, but it was on Kenny's 18th birthday in 2000 that really started my noticing how often they (butterflies) are around me, I went to the cemetery on Jan 23 (I felt very down knowing how much Kenny wanted to turn 18,He was so looking forward to being 18 years old). After the cemetery I went to "The Fence" (where I always leave a "roadside memorial" to Kenny) it was FREEZING OUT (I live in NYC where it's always very cold on Kenny's BDay) and while I was attaching the flowers and balloons to the fence 2 little butterflies came fluttering through the fence and just barely touched my fingers, suddenly I felt the frost from my fingers feel not as bad, then as soon as I finished putting those flowers & Balloons up on the fence the 2*

butterflies left... My daughter, family & friends that were there were shocked to see butterflies in Jan. in the Bronx, New York.

I am so very sorry for your loss, I just read ^Jims^ page and was so grateful that I read his story. What a truly handsome and wonderful young man your precious angel was and is. ^Jim^ does remind me of my son ^Kenny^, My son had dyslexia so he struggled since he was a little boy, I asked to have him tested when he was in the first grade but because ^Kenny^ was so smart they thought he was "just lazy" well finally in third grade he was tested and they found out about the dyslexia...He continued to struggle but at least he was getting help...

You & your husband (with, I believe, ^Jim's^ Help) have done such wonderful things for so many, I loved reading what ^Jim's^ father wrote and read at the High School Baccalaureate, You did live what you spoke!!!

After losing Kenny I found out that where Kenny & his friends crossed That Night on Sat. Aug 7, 1999 @ 10:50 pm (a portion of I95, Bruckner Expressway, New England thruway all meet at this spot) was a commonly used "shortcut" for too many people, Teens as well as Adults, another Mom lost her son (Daniel 21 years old) 8 months b4, but I never knew about it b4 I lost Kenny...From the day after Kenny's funeral I started working on getting fencing around the park (where everyone did the crossing from or to) and also on the center of the highway (everyone said "they will NEVER put a fence in the middle of a highway"). Well there it is, Fencing On The Highway, and of course all around the park. Many politicians as well as 3000 signatures on a petition helped.

During this period a very sweet man by the name of James Vacca (he is now our councilman) said one day to me "I always found it true that "Hell Hath No Fury Like A Woman Scorned," except when one TRYS to stand in the way of grieving parents, Especially a Grieving Mother, Even God helps a grieving parent, the rest of us just have to step aside or join in because we all know Who Will Win, A grieving parents fury & will are the winning side!!!!"

Your Son ^Jim^ has continued to live and make a difference in so many lives because you have made that a reality. I'm so sorry for this very long letter.

Many Blessings To You My New Friend (((((Dinah)))))...

Yes They Do Still Live, As Does Our Love For Them!!!!

I'm sending a gift to you (and of course the song I listened to while creating this) for your precious angel ^Jim^. Again, Thank You for sharing OUR Angels.

Love,  
Cathy

*^Kenny^ & Buffy's Mom [To Love Another Person, Is To See The Face Of God](http://memoriesofkenny.homestead.com/index.html) <http://memoriesofkenny.homestead.com/index.html>*

*MY SON ^KENNY^ MY ANGEL The depth of my grief is a constant with the breadth of my love, I would never sacrifice one to avoid the pain of the other.*

*<http://memoriesofkenny.homestead.com/index.html>*

*You Never Said "I'm Leaving,"*

*You Never Said Goodbye,*

*You Were Gone*

*Before We Knew It,*

*And Only God Knows Why*

**Kenny's symbols are butterflies.**

**Richard & Molly Gehring's son, Daniel (9-12-82), died from positional suffocation, 8-26-07.**

Below is the Eulogy Molly wrote and delivered at Daniel's service:

### **My Beautiful Daniel**

*Our son would appreciate your tears because he did not realize how many people loved him. And he would not be comfortable with it for too long. He would hug you in the way only Danny could do and say, "feel better."*

*This I will say to you, Daniel is not gone. He will be with us every day for the rest of our lives. Daniel loved the outdoors. Daniel loved animals. Dogs, reptiles, birds...So when you feel the wind on your face it is his sweet breath saying hello. When sunshine warms your face it is the brilliance of his smile. If a raindrop should hit your cheek, it is a tear to remind you of his presence, so pay attention. When you are startled by the thunderclaps, that is my son yelling as he plunges, bungee jumping without the cord. When an animal kisses you, please don't push it away, it is Daniel comforting you. In your quiet moments of pain listen carefully, Danny could*

*be a whisper, he is a gentle soul and will soothe you if you ask. Daniel's most important gift to all of us is his perseverance. Remember what he did. Remember what he showed all of us; what you could do if you want it bad enough. Danny turned his life around, completely. He became a National Honor Student, graduated from college, traveled to New Zealand and was driving a vehicle that he absolutely loved. Loved!! So today and all the days forward quiet your minds and welcome Daniel's spirit, he is here to bring us all peace and happiness if you invite him.*

I asked Molly if she had a symbol for Daniel. This is the story behind the symbol:

*I got Eeyore tattooed on my ankle for Daniel. HAHAH, imagine a 54-year-old woman and I got a tattoo. The point is because he was my Eeyore. Never too happy, always grumbling, complaining about something. But all these smiles.*

*I was overwhelmed when he died and then was asked what flowers did he like. O.....my.....gawd. I had no idea, and that made me sad because he was so young and how would I know what a young man (very macho) would like in a flower. I remembered when I was in labor with him. The labor room walls had daisies on it and I counted the petals. I still have a picture Danny drew for me when he was 7 with turquoise daisies. Lastly my sister-in-law came in one day after I had prayed for guidance. I felt daisies also were not foo foo. She came in with a daisy bouquet and Gerber daisies were delivered. I took that as a confirmation from the Lord and went with the daisies. So instead of holding balloons, my Eeyore is holding a daisy.*

**Daniel's symbols are Eeyore holding a daisy.**

**Joe & Lilly Pegourie's daughter, Celeste (5-17-77), died in an auto accident, 3-30-04.**

Lilly remembers Celeste's angel date in this manner:

*I often come across things special to Celeste, her memory. Many times now in unexpected places, unexpected ways I find them. The statement, "you planted, I grew" is one I have heard over the years. This*

*week I found a card I had written at her death when I looked this week at things to start a memory box. I very slowly only now am getting there.*

*Sunday is the 4th anniversary of Celeste's death. Some days are not as dark. Some days seem even darker than the day she died. I didn't do a memorial this year in a special way as I usually do. A printed one in the local paper.*

*A memorial lily at her church was Ruth's way to remember last week. Ruth hurts in a special way right now. Planning a wedding and she has no sister to share a milestone. Not sure a dearly loved 6-year-old nephew, the dearest part of Celeste, will be allowed to be there.*

*When Celeste died, all the cakes, the reception, invitations were in place. 3 weeks later to celebrate her accomplishment - a difficult one at best - getting her Master's in teaching.*

*The imagery of this scripture provided the original thoughts I wrote for that day in honor of special people who had planted in her life. I had to write a card trying to express what she passionately felt but never got to tell them.*

*Across the months for me--you have planted...slowly I am living again.*

“.....the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed. Apollo watered it. But God made it grow.

The man who plants and the man who waters and each will be rewarded according to his own labor.

For we are God's fellow workers.

I Corinthians 5b, 6, 8-9

*..A farmer prepares his soil to plant a crop  
A teacher prepares the learning environment  
for the students  
A farmer collects and gently plants  
the seedlings*

*A teacher welcomes pupils, young, pliable and eager  
With careful attention they plant  
A farmer into the soil  
A teacher into a life  
Watching, ever caring, to water for growth  
Both the farmer and the teacher  
All the while both are tended with faith-the*

*harvest of both fruit and lives*

*The farmer has planted, watered and cultivated his crop  
The teacher has planted, watered and encouraged the growth of knowledge  
With cultivation and faith they watered in love.*

**YOU PLANTED -  
I GREW**

*The harvest has come - lives you have touched,  
Your labors ready to pass on to another generation  
You planted in my life, you cared, you watered,  
You tended - with corrective guidance along the way  
my life complete.*

*I am not with you, to honor, love and give gratitude for your labors  
But from above I look with a smile and say,*

**YOU GAVE  
I GREW  
love mom**

**Celeste's symbols are cats and Mickey Mouse.**

**Dan & Betty Bryl's daughter, Jessica (1-19-77), was hit &  
killed by a driver talking on a cell phone, 4-3-00.**

Dan has written a poem to Jessica:

*Hi Folks,*

*Eight years on April 3rd. Our lives turned upside down. A journey begun by the loss of our oldest daughter Jessica. Betty, Sarah and I forever changed by the loss of a piece of our hearts, ripped from us on a Monday morning. The worst possible Monday one can imagine!*

*Stunned and numb, we barely existed, lots of tears, much sadness, and a feeling of complete helplessness. Then a lifeline was thrown to us in our ocean of suffering: a call from Meg Avery saying she was from TCF. A light*

*in the midst of darkness in our world. Then Jayne and Wayne Newton came into our lives and we started attending both the Lawrenceville and Tucker chapters of the TCF. We realized we were not the only ones that had suffered a great loss, unfortunately, there were many, and the numbers grow each day! We were not alone as it had seemed.*

*Betty and I decided to dedicate the rest of our lives to helping others as our Jessica had in her short life. Jessica loved children. She was days away from becoming a pediatrics nurse. We decided that if we tried for the rest of our lives, maybe we could at least make up for a portion of the goodness she would have brought to the world.*

*Kenny Chesney's song "Who'd You Be Today" really expressed our feelings for what we were feeling around 2005 when it came out. In the last few months, I also found myself wondering "Who would Betty, Sarah and I be today" if our Jessica had lived.*

*We continue to let folks know of the dangers of talking on the phone while driving. We continue to reach out to those that have lost a child. Most recently a co-worker, Gary, lost his 24-year-old daughter to a mixture of prescription drugs and alcohol. She slipped into a coma and passed after five days. He and his wife traveled to Baltimore to spend the last days with her. Gary came to tell me at work of his loss, I hadn't heard because no one from his store called me to let me know. His news hit me like a ton of bricks. Gary said his thoughts were with his wife about their loss, but also I was on his mind. They had joined the "club" that I had said I wouldn't wish upon my worst enemy. Gary and I now share the pain of a father that has watched their baby die, helpless to prevent this terrible loss. I remember 10 hours into the 12 hours of Jessica's life after the crash; we had just heard that Jessica was failing to breathe into her damaged lungs. It didn't sound good at all. We had been praying for God to help Jessica survive.*

*At this point I began to pray for some miracle that I could switch places with Jessica. Only in the movies.....*

*They are still showing the John Edward show in the United Kingdom. Many are signing Jessica's guestbook. I recently sent some of our bumper stickers to Australia! If we have saved one life.....*

*We take one day at a time. There isn't much in the world to cheer about these days. The people in power think more of money than people. We try to make a difference anyway we can.*

*Please say a prayer for Gary and his family for strength and direction.*

***Everyday You Are Missed***

*Eight years have past, since that awful day,  
So missed by one and all, no words can ever say.*

*I still see your smile, when I say your name,  
But with you not here, life isn't the same.*

*The sound of your laugh, echoes in my mind,  
As the saying goes, you were one of a kind!*

*A daughter, a sister, a great friend to all,  
If someone needed help, they gave you a call.*

*You grew and matured, and learned to be strong,  
Compassionate and loving, knowing right from wrong.*

*So often I sit and wonder, as time just slips away,  
If you had lived on, who would you be today?*

*You were so close to your dream, a nurse then a wife,  
Having kids of your own, such a wonderful life!*

*For some unknown reason, it wasn't meant to be,  
Everyday you are missed, by Sis, Mom and Me!*

*- In Memory of Jessica Lyn Bryl  
- By Dan Bryl, April 2008*

This is the bumper sticker:



**Jessica's symbols are an open book, cherished teddy bears, and an angel.**

**Bill & Kathy Southard's son, Jason Gregory (1-31-72), killed in an auto accident, 8-13-05.**

Kathy tells us about Jason and how she selected his symbols:

*Jason was an avid race fan and also he and his brother had a racing team in the stock car circuit. In 2004 Shannon, my oldest son took first place for the season and Jason took second place. The "Gregory Bros. Racing" was every Sat. night at the track and I never missed a race. Such exciting times. It was a 'family affair' type hobby. All of our family would go to the races every weekend....babies and all!*

*Jason went into business for himself finishing concrete and was quite an artist when it came to concrete. His business was just getting off its feet when he was killed.*

*We live at a lake and our home is the 'hangout' place in the summer months. Both my boys and their families would be here every Sunday afternoon for swimming, boating, fishing or just relaxing at our little beach. The day of his crash we were all together that morning at a kid's fishing tournament here.*

*Jason was a very good father and his oldest daughter, Morgan, was his "best friend." I have never seen such a close relationship between a little girl and her daddy as they had. Jason and his brother were EXTREMELY close brothers. They raced together, worked on projects together, and had the utmost respect for each other after they were adults. Ha! While being kids I wouldn't have called them close. But, as kids they played ball together a lot of times on the same team in school. They are 2 years apart.*

*Jason has 3 children, a brother, a half brother and a half sister. (His father and I were divorced when Jason was 2) Symbol for Jason? I would say a checkered flag or a pair of shoes. He had a thing about shoes. His shoes were never dirty and at the age of 33 he still had shoes that he had in high school. He always took good care of shoes. He was a clothes horse too. So different from his brother in that respect. I told him once if you could wear out a mirror, he would have worn out several! He had a lot of pride in how he looked. His # was 35 on his race cars. Maybe that could be*

*a symbol. It is on his headstone. Jason always had a big smile, could carry on a conversation with anyone and a heart of gold.*

*He loved his family. His little boy, Lance, was almost 2 when this all happened, but when he sees a skid loader or a small bulldozer he says "that's where Daddy works!" Jessica, who is now 3, was only 8 months old, so she has no memories of her Daddy.*

*Jason also loved the sun. That would be a good symbol for him. He loved to lie in the sun. We ALL took family vacations together. We made 2 trips to Daytona Beach before the crash and I'm SO thankful for those. We had a great time and Jason was the one competing in the pool games like hula hoop contest (came in 2nd) and limbo contest (he won that one) with all the college kids. Never a dull moment with him around.....was a witty guy too.*

I asked Kathy if I could reprint her email and this was her response:

*Yes, you have my permission to print anything you choose about my Jason. I will send you 2 pictures of Jason; 2 of my favorites. I think for his symbol I would like the sun. He loved to lay in the sun and we had to have a nice day that included sun (not rain) in order to race. I am also going to send you a poem that I would like others in your newsletter to see that my sister wrote for me a couple days after his death. This poem has been read many times, including his funeral, and several memorial tributes and benefits held in Jason's honor. Just to explain the poem a little: Jason's race car # was 35. Shannon's race car # is 53. Our "Gregory Bros. Racing" shirts are red. Most nights after the races the boys and their immediate families and friends (not me, it was too late for me) would sit around a campfire at Shannon's and "relive" the race of the evening. I always said it was probably like fisherman where the fish got bigger, but in this case the cars no doubt went faster!*

### ***“ONCE MORE AROUND THE TRACK”***

*My sister said to me*

*It's contagious, just you wait and see*

*I'm giving you the facts  
There's 35 and 53  
Moving fast around this track.*

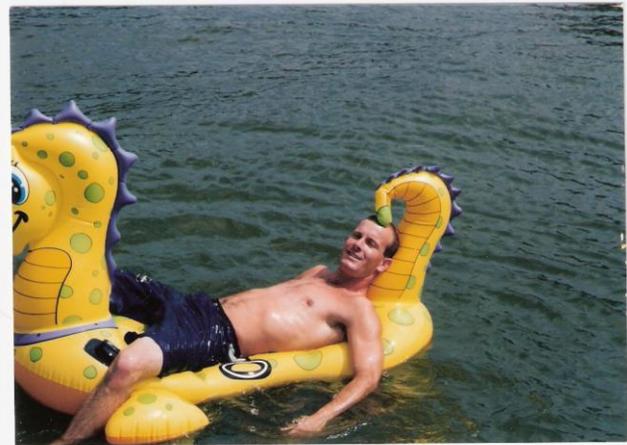
*The lights are bright, the engines roar,  
The crowd is on its feet  
You can see the red blur; you can feel the beat for  
The Gregory Brothers Racing team is pulling from the pack,  
Once more around the track.*

*Number 53 secures first place  
And he will set the pace.  
Trophies one and two will be the case.  
Don't worry number 35, I've got your back  
Once more around the track.*

*The racing team won trophies tall and bright,  
And trophies of the heart.  
Laughter, tears and memories will never lack  
Of bonfire stories told of  
Once more around the track.*

*The checkered flag for 35 is flying high  
For he has won the race.  
He smiles down on us from up above  
Can't you see his face?  
God now watches over Jason's back as he goes  
Once more around the track.  
Linda Ritchie*

**Jason's symbol is the sun.**



**Jeff & Paula Snyder's son, Johnathon (5-2-91), killed by a rod falling on his head, 9-26-98.**

Paula has a wonderful web site where we can add our children's names. You can add them under the Halo Garden and the Halo Garden of

Butterflies. I know you will want to include your child as I have and also thank Paula for another place I children will be remembered.

<http://www.halogarden.com>

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

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

This is the way the family celebrated Mary Beth's birthday:

*Thank you, dear Dinah, for always remembering. It means more than I could ever say with mere words.*

*All of our family who live on the island began the day at church and we ended the day with birthday cake and Mary Beth stories. Our two little Chinese grandbabies were in their jamas with sweet-smelling- just-shampooed hair and they both had made birthday cards.*

*Nothing meant more to Mary Beth than family gatherings so I know she was smiling her sweet smile.*

*Oh, if only we could see.....*

*I have to say it was a very comforting family gathering....for everyone!!*

*Aren't we fortunate to have lovely memories?*

*Love to you,*

*Nancy*

**The family calls Mary Beth, "our star."**



*We have all been touched by **cancer**, somewhere in our lives, please read below and keep it going.*

*I have been asked to keep this going and hope you will keep it moving too.*

*The New M&M colors .*

*Pass this on to all of your friends.*

*There are many women out there who have breast cancer. Lets do all we can to support this cause.*

***New Pink & White M&M's!!***

*The maker of M&M candies has teamed up with the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation & nbsp; to raise funds through the sale of their new 'pink & white' M&M candies.*

*For each 8-ounce bag of the special candies sold, the makers of M&M (Masterfoods) will donate 50 cents to the foundation. The next time you want a treat, please pick up a bag (now sold in stores nationwide) - you will be donating to a great cause and satisfying your sweet tooth. Just think...If each of us buys one bag or two.... how much will be donated? Buy a bag for a friend.....*

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

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