

LAMENTATIONS

Issue 125

middle

December, 2008

May God bless us all and help us through this season of love, when our most precious gifts are no longer with us, but forever with Him.

Please remember the following:

Bereavement guidelines for loss of a child:

If you think you are going insane, **THAT'S NORMAL**

If all you can do is cry, **THAT'S NORMAL**

If you have trouble with the most minor decisions, **THAT'S NORMAL**

If you can't taste your food or have any semblance of an appetite, **THAT'S NORMAL**

If you have feelings of rage, denial and depression, **THAT'S NORMAL**

If you find yourself enjoying a funny moment and immediately feeling guilty, **THAT'S NORMAL**

If your friends dwindle away and you feel like you have the plague, **THAT'S NORMAL**

If your blood boils and the hair in your nose curls when someone tells you "It was God's will", **THAT'S NORMAL**

If you can't talk about it, but can smash dishes, shred old phone books or kick the garbage can (preferably empty) down the lane, **THAT'S NORMAL**

If you can share your story, your feelings with an understanding listener???...another bereaved parent, **THAT'S A BEGINNING**

If you can get a glimmer of your child's life rather than his/her death,
THAT'S WONDERFUL

If you can remember your child with a smile, **THAT'S HEALING**

If you find your mirrors have become windows and you are able to reach out to other bereaved parents, **THAT'S GROWING**

~ from **CRUISE** - bereavement Counselors in the UK

In the last letter, I asked you to tell me things for which you are thankful. These are what I received. Thank you so much for sharing:

I am thankful Danielle was in my life for 25 yrs and that I got to know her. I loved and love her. I am thankful to have had that love in my life. I am thankful that God helps my pain when nothing else or no-one else can. I am thankful for each of you and for your support. Take care and Happy Thanksgiving and May God Bless each of you.

I am also thankful that I will see Danielle again ... as soon as I see Jesus, then I want to see Danielle!!!! We have Heaven to look forward to and I think that is encouraging knowing that this is not the final step. We have so much more to look forward to; meanwhile others need to know about Jesus, his love and eternal life that He offers us while we are here. Thanks again and May God Bless...

Verna Bowman

Dear Dinah

This is my first Thanksgiving without my daughter Lynelle. We are having everyone to my house just like last year but one place setting will be missing.

**I am very thankful to have her (my grandchildren) children with us daily. I look at my granddaughter and wonder how, at 5 years old, she can possibly understand that her Mom is no longer with us. My 3-year-old grandson looks so much like her.*

**I am thankful for being able to have my family with us to celebrate Thanksgiving.*

**I am thankful for my health and being able to get up each day.*

**I know the Christmas Holiday will be difficult as I'm sure you know. I think of my daughter daily. Sometimes finding it hard to handle. My family and friends keep me going.*

I wish you and your family a Happy Thanksgiving.

Gail (Robinson)

Without order, my list could go on and on, I am thankful for having him 25 years and three months. I am thankful for the mind to remember so much-Lord knows, I nearly lost my mind for awhile- For the rocking chair we often used at first for naps and bedtime, our little games and his imaginary friend, Mr. Hammerson, for his love especially, and for his love of the Rolling Stones, and other rockers, salmon croquettes, preppy clothes, his appreciation of Holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter-our little Christmas morning ritual and for the tears which come so freely when I ponder things for it is always relieving to have a good cry. We will celebrate these same things and always remember that Tommy is with us. And, Dinah, I am thankful for you who never lets us down. Your messages are always so appropriate and timely. Blessings to you.

With love,

Bess Masters

- 1. I AM THANKFUL FOR MY HEALTH*
- 2. I AM THANKFUL FOR MY CHILDREN*
- 3. I AM THANKFUL FOR MY HEALTHY GRANDCHILDREN/AND GREAT GRAND DAUGHTERS*
- 4. I AM SO THANKFUL FOR MY COMPUTER FRIENDS/ AND ALL MY FRIENDS HERE*
- 5. I AM THANKFUL FOR THE FOOD ON MY TABLE*
- 6. I AM THANKFUL I LIVE IN A FREE COUNTRY TO DO AS I WISH*
- 7. I AM THANKFUL FOR AN OLD CAR THAT STILL RUNS*
- 8. I AM THANKFUL FOR THE ROOF OVER MY HEAD*
- 9. I AM SO THANKFUL FOR THE GROUPS TO TALK ABOUT MY RANDY AND NOT BE JUDGED.*
- 10. I AM THANKFUL THAT MY DIVORCE IS ABOUT THROUGH A'MEN AND GOD BLESS EVERYONE!*

And the most thankfulness of all. This one is, I am thankful that God let me have my Randy for 30 and 1/2 years and that I was blessed to be his mom.

ALI MOM OF RANDY PETE MY DRUMMER BOY

I asked Ali for permission to print her email and she responded:

Of course you may use them dear. I have come a long way in this last year, more so than the last 8. I am doing well thanks to a wonderful grief counselor I had. She's the best I know, and I missed her so, but we keep in touch all the time with emails and calls. She worries about me so I wanted her to know I have made a lot of headway this year. On my list of thankfulness, God is good and I can worship the way I please. Another thankful item. Thank you and keep up the good work and a pat on the back from me to you. Ali (Hecox)

Dinah,

Glad to get your email. It made me sit down and make my list of things to be thankful for.

- 1. The 36 years we had Debbie*
- 2. All the good memories we have*
- 3. Tia-her soon to be 22 year-old-daughter*
- 4. Tim-her 18-year-old son*
- 5. That we live close to them and are a part of their lives*
- 6. That we have our son and his wife*
- 7. For Tiffany-a newly adopted 6 year-old-grandchild*
- 8. For Tyler-a newly adopted 3-year-old grandchild*
- 9. For friends that understand our loss*
- 10. The Compassionate Friends support group*

We are visiting our son and his family in Knoxville, Tennessee for the holiday.

Carolyn Looker

Hi, Dinah,

Here are 10 things I am thankful for:

- 1) Having had Adrienne with me for 28 years*
- 2) God's love*

- 3) *My husband*
 - 4) *My son*
 - 5) *My sisters*
 - 6) *My friends*
 - 7) *Military personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan*
 - 8) *My country*
 - 9) *Financial security in these troubling economic times*
 - 10) *Being able to help others*
- Bev Ingram*

*Hi Dinah, I wish you and your family a wonderful Thanksgiving!!!
10 things I am THANKFUL for:*

1. *I'm thankful that I was John's mom*
 2. *I'm thankful for Gods love, comfort and GodWinks*
 3. *I'm thankful for my family and friends*
 4. *I'm thankful for my faith*
 5. *I'm thankful for 26 years with my loving son*
 6. *I'm thankful for Families of Highway Fatalities*
 7. *I'm thankful for my church family*
 8. *I'm thankful for my home and food on the table*
 9. *I'm thankful for where I am in my life, without my son here physically*
 10. *I'm thankful for my Heavenly Father*
- Carol Kiparisus*

I know this is a little late for Thanksgiving, but I still wanted to share:

10 Things I am Thankful for:

1. *Every precious day that I get to spend with my children (biological and step). I know all too well how quickly that can be taken from me.*
2. *Every moment that Kaitlyn was able to be here on Earth with me. I miss her everyday, but do not regret her one bit, through all the pain her loss has caused me I know there are many more happy memories that come to mind.*
3. *My health and the health of my remaining children.*
4. *The birth of my newest child. Though she may never know Kaitlyn, I believe that Kaitlyn picked this precious daughter specifically for me.*

- I see so much of Kaitlyn's determination in Gabi's face that I know a part of Kaitlyn lives on in her baby sister (and her older sister too).*
- 5. That I have a wonderful loving and caring man to share my ups and downs with for the rest of my life. Even though he never knew Kaitlyn he never hesitates to hold me and let me cry over her nor does he forget that she is still my child even in death.*
 - 6. For all my extended family. Those who are related by blood as well as those I have been united with in my grief. Without them I do not know where I would be today.*
 - 7. For all the doctors and nurses who tried endlessly for a year to stop the cancer from taking my sweet baby from me. Although their attempts did not save her, they gave me more time with her than I would have had otherwise. And they loved her and she them.*
 - 8. For my job. I work with amazing and understanding people. They are there for the good times and standing at my side during the bad times. For almost 9 years now.*
 - 9. For my home. Though it is not a home I ever lived in with Kaitlyn I know she is there. Her face looks out at me from all her pictures and her spirit looks over me and my family in all that we do.*
 - 10. For the ability to love as completely as I do. When I am missing Kaitlyn so much, I am thankful that I knew the love I had for her because it is that love that is causing the pain that never seems to end. And that is truly a gift.*

Donnell Scott- forever loving and missing Kaitlyn (7/20/00-3/24/02)
www.caringbridge.org/mo/kaitlynlouise

Ten things I'm thankful for

- 1. I'm thankful I had the love of such a beautiful angel for 33 years*
- 2. I'm thankful for the two sweet children she left to love me and for me to love more than words can say*
- 3. I'm thankful to have been found by the Good Shepherd*
- 4. I'm thankful for the hope God has instilled into our hearts*
- 5. I'm thankful for my son and my two other grandchildren who live far away from me, but know I'm loved*
- 6. I'm thankful I still have two very elderly parents still alive*
- 7. I'm thankful for the many comforting and loving friends I've made along the way*

8. *I'm thankful that out of something bad, something good has come in that I'm a better person today than yesterday*

9. *I'm thankful that God never fails me, but provides for me abundantly*

10. *Most of all, I'm thankful that in all these years God has collected and saved all my tears in his bottle, each tear a prayer that is being stored for the day that I arrive in heaven and my tears will turn into dancing.*

In Loving Memory of My Lily of Heaven

Laura Ann Kimble

11/05/68 - 10/19/02

www.geocities.com/dadtochris3/laura1.html

Dinah, thank you so much.

With Love from one of your fellow travelers

Ann Sorbora

Laurasmom

I emailed Ann to ask for permission to print her list and she responded:

After I lost my beautiful girl, I was never the same again. I became full of love and compassion for everyone. Now I look back to my earlier life and I wasn't all that great really. Selfish, you know. Now I love every little blessing I get. I am a new creation in Christ. God bless you this Thanksgiving day and may His peace be with you.

Love,

Ann

Dear Dinah:

I am glad enough time has gone by that I can think of Jimmy without the terrible pain and sense of loss that I had for so many, many years.

I am glad for all the fellow travelers that I've met over these 24 years, and for the fellow travelers that I will meet in the future.

I am glad that I had 39 years with the love of my life and sad that I couldn't go into old age with him, but am grateful for the gift of knowing, loving and living with him. I am a better person because of him.

I am grateful for my surviving children and aware of those who do not have any other living children.

I am grateful for the people whose courage I "borrowed" when I thought I couldn't go on without Jimmy.

I am grateful for my brothers and sisters who never forgot Jimmy, and for each Thanksgiving when we remember each of our beloved dead; my mom, dad, husband, son, baby and sister-in-law. We say a special prayer for them all.

I am grateful for two priests who came into my life at a time when I needed them most; one saved my soul and the other saved my life.

I'm grateful for my grandchildren; mostly for my first grandchild who was born about 6 years after Jimmy died. She gave me back my holidays.

I'm grateful that even in my pain I reached out to others who could understand the depth of my pain. 24 years ago there was only one support group in the area; and I was so grateful for Judy's support and understanding.

And lastly, I'm grateful for the opportunity to thank you, Dinah, for your ministry and all the healing you have done over the years since Jim's death.

We are all here to help one another.

Love, Anne Byrnes

Hello Dinah,

I lost my dad in April. He had been in the hospital for 4 months; he was 83. Although I miss him a lot, I can't grieve for him because I'm still grieving for Whitney. I don't know that I can list 10 things I'm thankful for but I can list a few. I'm very thankful for salvation, for God-given strength to get me through each day. I couldn't make it without Him. I can witness to patients daily about this. I'm very thankful for the friends God has given us, they have brought us such peace. The job I have where everyone is a Christian, also to you for your continued support, I love you. One of my friends & I love taking pictures so we started a photography club in West

Liberty. We are having so much fun with it. A local professional photographer & his wife have been helping us; giving us lots of advice. Hope you have a good Thanksgiving.

*Luv ya,
Shelia Allen*

Dear Dinah

I am so thankful that the Lord has brought you into my life. I am thankful that I have you to lead us on this Journey.

I know how you feel about Jim to be gone for almost as long as he was here... I am almost there... Luciana has been gone 14 years and she was 15 when she died so next year I will be going through this and I can feel already that my heart just sinks when I think about it...

So here is my list...

- 1. I am thankful for you and Rosemary*
- 2. I am thankful for my other 2 kids. I can't believe they are already older than Luciana was... and they were only 4 and 5 at the time. Now they are 18 and 19 and in College!!! I am so thankful for them in my life!!*
- 3. I am thankful that I have the joy of the Lord and it shows.... every time I meet someone for the first time and I tell them about Luciana... they always ask me how did I survive? And my answer is always the same... by the grace of God. He continues to hold me in the palm of His hands... and guides me through the path that I must go until the day I will be reunited with Luciana again*
- 4. I am thankful I have peace, joy, love and good health.*
- 5. I am thankful I have a cozy home, wonderful food on my table and nice clothes to wear.*
- 6. I am thankful I live in AMERICA!!*
- 7. I am thankful for my church*
- 8. I am thankful for many sincere friends*
- 9. I am thankful for my family*
- 10. I am thankful for my dog Lola*

*Love to you and Happy Thanksgiving!!
Lucia Bayne*

1. *That Jesus loves me, even me!*
2. *That Jesus loves Brian.*
3. *That God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life!*
4. *That we live in a country where we can still express these beliefs.*
5. *That my family has recovered from the death of Brian--our son, brother, nephew and grandson. (We're not "over it"—just healed. Wounds heal, but the scars remain. Healing is good.)*
6. *That we will be together with Brian again—thanks to our Lord Jesus.*
7. *That many of our friends and family are believers today because of Brian's home-going.*
8. *That my whole family (minus one) can be together this year. I know this will not be the case every year.*
9. *For good health.*
10. *For our jobs.*

*Happy Thanksgiving, Dinah. We do have a LOT to be thankful for!
Melody Sledgister*

1. *Thankful for, my parents, who taught me about being a parent and prepared me to be a parent for my two precious boys, Alex and Dan.*
2. *Thankful for my grandparents who loved me so unconditionally and gave me their time and took an interest in my journey.*
3. *Thankful for life experiences, the good and the not so good, for this is where I realize I have grown with insight and understanding.*
4. *Thankful for my faith in knowing I am a child of God and that He walks beside me and at times carries me no matter what.*
5. *Thankful for friends that have crossed my journey these soon to be sixty-six years and the love and understanding they brought my way.*
6. *Thankful for the opportunity to serve others for in doing so, I recognize the importance of reaching out.*
7. *Thankful for my health and the doctors that God places in my life to care for me and others.*
8. *Thankful for our one and only precious grandchild and the joy she brings to our hearts.*
9. *Thankful for my precious father-in-law who I am honored to care for. He is a WWII disabled veteran.*

10. Thankful for the love of my precious husband for his love and care these past twenty-seven years.

11. Thankful for having had the opportunity of being the mother of Alex and Dan.

12. Thankful for all the men and women who are serving our great country in uniforms all over the world...Military, Hospitals, Police, Teachers, Fire.

*Have a Blessed Thanksgiving,
Jackie Searl*

My list of Thanks

1--Thank you, Dinah, for keeping our families together

2--Thankful for this day

3--I, too, am thankful for Lynn timer for 44 years

4--I am thankful for her three beautiful daughters who constantly keep in touch with me.

5--I am thankful for Lynn timer's mother with whom I shared 55 years

6--I am thankful very much for my new life with Ida as my new wife, a long time friend of both of us

7--I am thankful for a country still together after a tumultuous election regardless of how each may have cast their ballot

8--I am thankful for my church which is getting stronger by the day in spite of all the negative diversions

9--I am thankful that God is still in charge regardless of all the biased media to the contrary

10-Thankful that we, in this country still have the freedom to converse and share in this way and feel the love as it flows from the hearts of those of us who mourn the loss of loved ones

11-Happy Thanksgiving

From a fellow traveler, John Clarke

Dear Dinah (also Jim, Rosemary and Luther),

Thank you for reminding us to think of our blessings as we prepare for Thanksgiving! As you said so well, "we know what we are not thankful for"...

but we still have many blessings and it's so important that we take time to remember them.

One of my dear friends, who is Heather's Godfather said to me after her service, "God will be sending you blessings, large and small, that you cannot even imagine at this moment. Of course, right now you are in so much pain, and it would be easy to miss those blessings. I challenge you to look for the blessings as they arrive and embrace them. Even though the blessings will not remove the loss, they will be able to ease the pain, and enrich your life."

I thought this showed great wisdom, but I really wasn't sure the course of my grief would include such events. Then I started to think that God had already sent many treasures in all the kindnesses done for our family to that point. Even though we were in shock and intense pain, I could feel God's mercy all around.

Not long after this advice, I realized God was pouring out kindness and heaping blessings on us everywhere we turned, yet my pain was overwhelming, and I couldn't even imagine a future where I would ever again feel happy or productive. I didn't know how to do anything in my new life but take one moment at a time and not look forward any more than I had to. Even the smallest task seemed to be too much.

I was so touched to receive the grief packet from Rosemary, where I was first introduced to you all, and I knew something very special had arrived for my journey. As I read the materials in the packet, and understood the experiences shared there, I was encouraged to think of you all finding a way to "live" after your loss. I had felt so alone, alone like I have never known, but surely all of you had felt the same during your loss. What was puzzling was how did you have the strength to give so freely to others? I marvel at the courage that took and give thanks for all your gifts you share so freely. What a special day when I got to meet you and Taylor, Rosemary and Luther and really have you and other fellow travelers in my life. You all are such an inspiration to me and through your hard work and many, many sacrifices, the rest of us have tools to start again. I am so richly blessed and I do have productive days now and my "to do" lists have grown every day. Thank you for all you have done and continue to do...for so many.

So my list starts:

*Having the most amazing friends on the planet, (that would be you)
Having lots of ways to stay in touch with our loved ones
Having a home with Dwight and Taylor (and also Winky and Buffy)
Knowing I will see Heather again when it's my turn for Heaven, and get to
meet all of her new friends, your children
Knowing Heather and all the children are perfect, with no pain or suffering
Having memories no one can take away
Having photographs and recordings of our lives
Having Taylor's precious friends making noise
Having volleyball and all the great energy it provides Taylor and her team
Having Gods love, always*

*Thank you for providing the encouragement to count my many
blessings,*

*I hope you have a wonderful holiday filled with blessings and love,
Much, much love,
Judy Trew*

Dear Dinah,

*I always enjoy getting your news. You are so thoughtful and one of
these days I would like to meet you face to face.*

Things I am thankful for:

- 1. That I had my wonderful grandson (Cody) for ten years to love and get to know.*
- 2. That I had my loving and wonderful son (Dale) for 33 years. He was such a joy to everyone who knew him.*
- 3. That I still have 4 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren who bring so much joy and happiness to us.*
- 4. For my parents who loved me and taught me to be a Christian; that work does pay off and always treat others as you want to be treated.*
- 5. For my in-laws who loved me like their child rather than just someone married to their son.*
- 6. For my husband who is always ready to protect and take care of his family.*
- 7. For my son, Scott, who was such a good father to Cody and is a good father to Tiffany.*

8. *For our troops who put their lives on the line every day for us.*
9. *For all the material things that I have.*
10. *For my church, church family and our pastor.*

These are only a few of the things I am so thankful for. I could go on and on, but so could a lot of other people.

Hope you have a wonderful Thanksgiving.
Shirley Chappell

10 things I am thankful for.

1. *To have God in my life*
2. *For my family and friends*
3. *For my Husband who is the best*
4. *To be a mother to my precious Brandy*
5. *The honor to have had her in my life for 18 years*
6. *How blessed I am that, everyone tells me how much they loved her.*
7. *My Memories of Brandy, Momma, Daddy and my brother and how I can smile and think back on how wonderful it was to know each one of them.*
8. *I am thankful for my Brothers Ken, Victor and my sister Dorothy*
9. *For my job*
10. *Our home and our health.*

Sometimes life has a way of changing your life and you have just got to pick up the pieces and go on.

Love Fellow traveler,
Juanita (Hicks)

Ten Things for which I am thankful.

1. *My God*
2. *Family*
3. *Children*
4. *Grandchildren*
5. *Good Health*
6. *Freedom of worship.*
7. *Thankful for getting at least 19 years with my son*
8. *Friends*
9. *Every day God gives us*

10. Thankful God gave us beautiful country to see

Judy Toles

Dinah,

You are sneaky! Ten things I am thankful for? I thought this would be hard, but it was easy and very therapeutic after surviving another Thanksgiving. Thanks for making me do this, Dinah you are good at that! Okay 10 things I am thankful for:

Love and Peace, Becky

1. God's Grace of Eternal life by Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, and His unfailing love and strength He provides to me, every day, every minute and second.

2. 3 beautiful children, even though they are no longer with me, Jay, Cyndy and Nathan Crim.

*3. I **know** all 3 are with Jesus and someday I **know** I will be with them again. **Blessed Assurance.***

4. My husband Keith, and grandchildren (all 6 of them are so special).

5. My dad, sisters, brother and wonderful Christian mother (she is with my children).

6. My church and church family.

7. My friends, especially those who are bereaved parents, for their support and love is unlimited.

8. My health.

9. My home.

10. My job.

*Preparing for the Holidays? We're putting a tree up for the grandchildren. Keith and I are singing in the Christmas Choir concert our church is providing this Sunday, Dec. 5th at 3:00 and 7:00 (Immanuel Baptist Church, Lex. Ky.) Christmas music used to be painful, but if you join the church choir and **have to sing it**, you get past the pain. Buying presents helps me, I love to give presents to my family and friends. I no longer dread Christmas. I don't like it that my kids are no longer with me, but I try to imagine how they are celebrating in Heaven. It has to be a better celebration than it is here! I also try to focus on what Christmas really means. It is about Jesus, my King's birth, the greatest gift God has ever given to mankind. I believe that most people have experienced the "Christmas Spirit," generously buying for others, sometimes needy families you don't even know. Feeling great while you are shopping, being in a better mood than normal, being nicer than usual. Many of us used to feel like this*

*before our children died, sometimes the entire month of December. I believe that was **God's Holy Spirit working in us and through us.** I remember others saying it was a shame we all couldn't be like this all year long. Can we ever get this back? I believe we can. If you let God work through you and let Him take over your life, the Christmas Spirit can return, **all year long.** This does not mean we won't continue to miss our children at Christmas or the rest of the year. What it does mean is that your joy in life will return, God's will for you will be clear and you won't be in death valley forever. Let go and let God. It won't mean you don't love your child any less. God's love will fill you up and overflow and spill on others. People will want to know more about your child because of the love and compassion you have. Their light will shine through you. Let God take over, and let go of some of your pain. I have. I'm going to live, and live life abundantly. Even with 3 children in Heaven. I intend to join them someday.*

*Love and Peace,
Becky (LaVey)*

Blessings Dinah,

It was so good to get the e-mail from you, and I so hope you had a good Thanksgiving. I am also thankful for my son Mike and my daughter Samantha who always purchase and place a grave blanket on their sister Jaci's grave every Thanksgiving. Since my husband and I moved to South Carolina from Michigan a few years ago they have started their own tradition of driving out to the cemetery, placing the blanket and then the 2 of them go and have dinner after and remember their sister. It eases my heart to know that they will never forget her and I need not feel guilty for not being there to do it myself. Due to work issues we cannot go up for Thanksgiving, but I will always be there for Christmas, God willing! I also can't believe it has been 13 years since Jaci's death. It never leaves me (the loss) for long, but I am thankful that God does give me the strength to handle it. I am thankful for your devoted spirit in keeping all of us "fellow travelers" in touch with each other. That is a wonderful ministry that has helped so many. I am thankful for each of my grandchildren who have been a healing of the heart these past 11 years, and also I am thankful that my daughter Toni in Florida who struggles with emotional issues is having a good day TODAY! We take it 1 day at a time. I am thankful that God saw me thru 2 surgeries this past year and also my husband Joe has had 2 surgeries as well. In this time of economic crisis I am grateful that both Joe and I have jobs. There are many more things that I am grateful for, but I am especially

thankful for being able to feel joy again especially at the holidays. May God grant you peace, health and happiness this holiday and the New Year as well. Gail Friedmann

Dinah,

I am just getting around to replying to your email, I accepted your challenge of 10 things I AM thankful for, it was easier than I thought:

- 1) I am Thankful for having my son Justin for 20 years and 51 weeks, but I will admit I am selfish and greedy and wanted more!*
- 2) I am Thankful for my son Joshua, my boys have brought me such joy, I am sad that he doesn't have a sibling to share his life with.*
- 3) I am Thankful that Edith Epperson came to me within a week of losing Justin, she told me about JIM's conference, you and Rosemary. I am thankful we had the courage to attend. We have met so many wonderful people who have helped us through, without them I know we would not have made it this far. THANK YOU!!!!*
- 4) I am thankful for my husband David, I am not thankful that I have to see him hurt so badly.*
- 5) I am Thankful for Charlee, (Justin's fiance), I am so thankful she and my son got to experience real love, I am not thankful they didn't get their future, marriage, family, etc. but she is like a daughter to me.*
- 6) I am thankful for our families, without their help I don't know how we would have survived, Mike & Lori not only helped with the service, but they kept our business going.*
- 7) I am thankful for our employees who kept our business going while we were paralyzed.*
- 8) I am thankful for all the people we have met through TCF, we gain strength from each meeting. We have met some wonderful friends.*
- 9) I am thankful for my nieces and nephews, they bring us such joy.*
- 10) I am thankful for all the thoughts and prayers from everyone. This is sustaining us.*
- 11) I am thankful for Sister Mary, from Saint Camillus, she has truly been a Godsend!*

Thank you, Dinah, you are an amazing person, I think of you and young Jim every day. I know he is so proud of you!!!!

*Love,
Tammy Samples*

Hi Dinah

The holidays are here once again. I have been busy with my 3 g/grandchildren Ryan 9, Kyle 7 and Leah 1. I am grateful for the joys and blessings they bring to me. They are Jim's g/children.

I am grateful for my beautiful Amelia who now lives in Maine, Ed's daughter.

I am grateful that her mom Meryl has kept her close to me.

I am grateful that the Lord has kept me well and healthy to enjoy them.

I am grateful for you and all my dear friends from Groww Heavenly Angels who have helped me walk this Journey of Grief.

I go to the water each day and sit and read and drink my coffee. If it is really nice, I walk along the shore and just drink in the beauty of the sky and bay. I am grateful that I am able to do this and enjoy God's beautiful works of nature.

I see many people walking along, children playing in the sand and memories of mine comfort me. We always lived near the water.

My Judy was a great water skier. She loved the water and flying across it.

My Jim was a swimmer and would dive from the bridge, fearless. lol. Ed was the quiet one and would read and just enjoy it all.

When I think of you Dinah, I see your Jim's handsome face in front of me and grateful that he is with my three basking in the glory of the Lord. What a Christmas they shall have!!

Dinah my thoughts and prayers are with you this Christmas and may you and your husband have a peaceful and joyous day.

With Love

A Grateful Friend (Fellow Traveler)

Maggie St. John

Dinah,

It is hard to think of things we are thankful for, especially this first Holiday Season after losing our child. (I know you share this feeling.)

But, here it goes:

We are thankful for:

- 1. The 26 years we had with our precious son.*
- 2. His beautiful 12 year old sister.*
- 3. His beautiful twin daughters.*
- 4. The memories we have of him alone and with the three of them.*

5. *That one day God will allow us to see him again in HEAVEN.*
6. *That his dear friends have not forgotten him, they go see him often at his resting place.*
7. *Our love for him and that it will never go away.*
8. *That the LORD gives us hope and guidance each day as we travel this path of loneliness without him.*
9. *Each other, our friends and family that suffer his loss also.*
10. *Those other parents who have suffered such a great loss as us, but offer their love and support.*

On Thanksgiving Day we did a balloon release in HARLEN'S memory at his resting place. Many family and friends attended. While it was too painful for others to attend, they sent their thoughts and prayers for him and the family.

A partial slideshow of the balloon release and a beautiful poem written by his dear friend Ashley and read by his best friend Nick is on there also. This poem was/is truly him. Site is: www.myspace.com/rip_harlen (There is an underscore between rip and harlen)

*With Love and Prayers,
Beverly (Baker) and Family*

*Hi Dinah,
Thanks for this email.*

Things I am thankful for:

- 1) *Thankful for the time Anne and Paxston were with us, even though it was too short*
- 2) *Thankful for the sweet memories we have of them*
- 3) *Thankful for Parker, our precious grandson, now 15 and a sophomore. Parker is a great young man! He is a good student, plays football, wrestles and will be on the track team come spring. (He lettered in track his freshman year and earned a letter jacket) I'm not proud---ha!*
- 4) *Thankful that you have been such an inspiration in my life since the tragedy of deaths of Anne and Paxston.*
- 5) *Thankful that Anne was a Christian*
- 6) *Thankful that Anne is in heaven with Paxston and watching over her family!*

You know, Dinah, I could go on. However, I will close. Thanks once again for all you do and have done for Fellow Travelers!

*Love ya!
Jolene Hutchinson*

Dinah,

I am so very thankful that you have used the gifts God gave you. You pushed through your pain and are willing to help others.

I still want to meet you. The days seem to go by so fast, but the hours drag. Does that make sense?

I am thankful that my husband, Jack, is so very supportive.

I am thankful that I have the assurance of one day being with Joshua.

I only pray that God doesn't frown on my desire to be with Joshua first, God second.

I am thankful for Jennifer and Justin.

*Take care,
Cindy McGough*

Grief Grafts

Alan & Debra Reagan's son, Clint (5-15-85) died from an accidental overdose, 8-6-05.

I hope you will read these articles:

Gratitude Journal Brings Grieving Mother Relief

November 13, 2008 by [Neil Chethik](#)

Filed under [Death of a Child](#), [Featured Articles](#)

By Debra Reagan –

There came a point in my grief over the death of my son Clint when I became so tired of being tired. I began to search for something that would offer a bit of relief. I purchased a small notebook and began keeping a daily gratitude journal. Every day, I tried to find something to write in my journal.

Most days, at first, I was just grateful that I had made it through another day. As time went on, I began to find small things of which I was truly grateful. I began to see that I had received many blessings. These were blessings that I would happily give back if I could turn back the clock, but they were blessings nonetheless.

It seemed that as my journal grew, so did my strength. I began to look forward to logging my gratitude in my journal. I suppose my focus was changing and my pain over the loss was being replaced with my appreciation of those around me. This felt right for me.

At one point, I expanded my journal by adding a section where I could record events that had brought me brief moments of happiness. I wanted to determine if there was a pattern to these moments. I longed so much to be happy again. My dear Clint wanted everyone to be happy.

It has been awhile since I began my journal and I continue to take one day at a time as I search to find what is right for me. I accept that my new normal will always have a level of the pain because of our great loss; I want to find ways to carry this loss. I want Clint's life to also have a legacy of love, joy and happiness. The tears still come, but sometimes now smiles come too. Those smiles represent the love and precious memories.

My husband once asked me if I would do it all again. I knew what he meant. He was asking me if I would marry him again and have our two beautiful sons if I knew this would be the outcome. In the depth of the pain, I must admit I paused and wondered what person would ever choose to go through this anguish? But then the answer came: If avoiding the pain meant avoiding the love, then I would choose the love with all the strings attached. I am grateful for this love.

I am grateful for the past and the time we shared as a family. I am grateful for many things in the present: my family and friends, the special connection I still have with Clint. I am grateful for my faith and the future, because I believe I will see Clint again.

Reach Debra Reagan through her website, www.clint-reagan.memory-of.com

Clint's symbol is a star.

Lori Hendricks' son, Michael Delashmits (12-19-85) was killed in an auto accident with his father who was drinking, 11-10-96.

Lori wanted me to share her story of hope:

Dear Dinah,

I wanted to take a moment to thank you for the support you have given me the past 12 years since I lost my only child, Michael at 10 years old.

I was a single mom then and my world, I thought, had ended. I went to California (from MI) and prayed about it. And in a church at Laguna Beach, God spoke and told me to go home June 29th. I will never forget that day. My brothers did not want me to go, but I felt I got the message for a reason.

I went back to MI and met my current husband, July 4th—1 week later. He did not have kids, didn't want kids, nor want to get married. But what we had in common was, he had accidentally killed a little boy while driving. The boy darted out in front of him. So I knew why we were brought together. I reminded him that the pain does not go away, but you cope.

This December 15th, we will be married 10 years, with a gorgeous 9-year-old daughter going to Sanibel School on Sanibel Island, FL. I got pregnant on my honeymoon and had her at 40.

Life can be a blessing after so much pain. If you can just share my story to give hope to others, I would feel blessed.

Thank you,

Lori Hendricks

Michael's symbols are pennies.

Gregg & Paula Roche's son, Matthew (6-26-80) died from an accidental fall, 10-17-05. I just received a letter from Paula telling me that another son, Jamie (4-29-75) died in his sleep, 4-7-07.

Paula wrote about their second tragedy:

Dear Dinah,

I am so sorry I have not corresponded with you in so long. I do, however, appreciate all your care and thoughts regarding our children that we have lost. Matthew Roche was my youngest son who fell down a flight of basement stairs while helping our neighbors move and suffered severe head trauma as his head took the blunt of the fall. He was such a sweetheart and we miss him terribly.

On April 7, 2007, our beloved middle son, Jamie also passed. He was working in Bangor, Maine for a local company that programmed the student locks in the dorms. We talked on Good Friday and he had a couple of days off, but was not going to make the very long trip to Connecticut for Easter. We said we would talk on Sunday, but we never did. He passed in his sleep, undetermined cause of death. As I learned later, his very good friend, Josh had talked to him around noon on that Saturday and he told him he wasn't feeling well; flu like symptoms and was going to sleep it off. He had also gone snowboarding previously and had hit his head, but the autopsy showed nothing. We are perplexed without having an answer. I was told by the medical examiner that this is a science and sometimes there can be no answers.

He also left his long time companion, Capucine and they were expecting their first child in October of '07. He was so excited about the baby-I remember so clearly the day he told us. We were so happy. Morgan Jamie Roche was born on October 2, 2007. She is a joy and a very special gift and is so much like her daddy. We just love her along with my oldest son's boy, Cooper, who is 6 1/2. They are what really keep my husband and me going.

You've lost your son and I think you might feel like me-it's a struggle every day, the pain is always there, but somehow you get the strength to go on and deal with it. There's only one other choice and I'm sure your son and my boys would not want us to have chosen that path.

Thank you again for your thoughts. They are deeply appreciated.

Keep in touch.

Much love,

Paula

I asked Paula if she had chosen a symbol for Jamie and she wrote:

Jamie was born on April 29th, 1975 and the sign for him would be a shamrock--he thought he was 100% Irish when in fact he was Irish, French and Italian. Miss them so.

Matt's symbol is a court jester, and Jamie's is a shamrock.

**Scott & Bonnie Thompson's daughter, Amanda Worley
(5-3-91) was killed in an auto accident, 12-5-07.**

Hello Dinah,

This is Bonnie Thompson the mother of Amanda Worley, who went to Heaven on Dec. 5th, 2007. Boy is this time of year breath-taking. I told you as we hugged good-bye at the Cumberland in June last year that I would let you know about the guard rails that I was working on. I finally got them installed and was so proud. But, before they were installed, two weeks earlier a young man age 19, Nick Corey who actually lived around the corner from me, was killed in the same place Amanda was, only 2 trees down. I fought until I won and now maybe another mom will not have to live with such heartache of telling your child goodbye.

Dec 5th, will be 1 year when my baby Amanda Worley, age 16 went to Heaven. I don't know if her sister and I will handle this. Two other ladies and I have started a Grief Support Group in the name of "The Broken Road."

I want to thank you for all you did to bring so many people together. All you could feel was sadness but with love all around, I, as everyone else wish this could go on if you had help. I know of 10 children around here where I live that have been killed in the last year.

Almost a year, what have I done but only to exist and get thru to see if the pain is better this day than the others.

Take care and Happy Holidays.

Bonnie Thompson

The Broken Road Will Also Have A Candle Lighting On Dec 14th, at 7:00PM. We expect around 50 to 75 people to attend. I am just now getting feeling back enough to really mourn and this time is really killing me. Amanda's sister, Emily, is finally seeking counseling for the 3rd visit and also has other troubles with issues she would not like mentioned. So keep us in your prayers and anything that is going on so we may participate. Emily will one day think like me; all we can do now is not let Amanda's memory of everything wonderful she did in her short 16 years of her life ever stop giving. When I can I will send you a picture of Amanda's little daughter she

adopted in El Salvador on her Youth Christian Concert. She worked part time at Hardee's after school, and after tutoring. She gave \$30.00 monthly to Genesis Reyes to help in her schooling and other things she needed. I spoke with World Vision Outreach to see what I could send her for Christmas in Amanda's memory. They wanted a goat...I think I will send the money instead. I don't think Fed-Ex would do that for me...Amanda would get a kick out of that...I read the letters to her at the grave site when they respond every month...Genesis also is 5 years old and she sends me colors of circles....I know Amanda sent the snow today...She would have her long beautiful hair wet with the beautiful flakes she loved the snow just to make an angel and throw snow balls at me... She was my sidekick...With a HEART of gold...How I miss her. I love her with all my heart and soul....

Bonnie Thompson

Amanda's symbols are butterflies and hearts.

**Rob & Faye Martin's daughter, Lisa Mewbourne (9-23-65)
died from a self-inflicted gunshot, 4-22-91.**

Faye writes about being "crazy" which we all understand:

I nearly went crazy with wanting to keep everything Lisa touched. She had a homemade fruit cake in her freezer that I kept for over TEN years. Right now, 17 years after her death, in my bathroom right along with everything else, I still have a box of "Lysol Touch Ups," and a travel size bottle of "Hosiery Mate" rinse-free stocking wash. In my refrigerator door, I have her little bottle of capers. And right now I am upset because I cannot find a bottle of liquid soap that I thought I still had. It was under her sink and the smell reminded me of her. I kept it long after the smell went away. I don't remember if I finally threw it away or not. I must have.

I found a single long brown hair on her sofa and knew it had to be hers. I taped it in the back of her Bible and still have it. I could go on and on because I kept so many "things that Lisa had touched." Some of it was big important things like her coats and clothes and shoes; but some were little things like the above. I nearly went crazy with not wanting to part with the things she touched. I would take them out sometimes and kiss

or hold them to my breast. Just last year, I gave some of her clothes to a charity, but kept a lot even though I can't wear the size ten's anymore. But, I wore them as long as I could squeeze into them. I just can't part with all of them. They occupy a special place in my closet and in my heart. I can just see her in them. She dressed so beautifully and the clothes are beautiful, too.

I'm one of those people who keeps everything. I have things from her childhood; lots of little things....notes and cards she wrote to me, pink knitted baby booties; the last gift she gave me, sooo much. I had them boxed up and put away for many years until I could finally take them out and look at them. I bought a large glass curio cabinet to put these precious, priceless things in. I added tiny lace doilies, lots of butterflies and photos of her, even a little pair of gold and silver shoes she had. I keep my POS "Forever in Our Hearts" memory book open to her two pages. I found that after I set up this beautiful display that I could walk by it every day and smile and enjoy her memory. But, it took many, many years to do this. I healed very slowly.

One other crazy thing I did at first was to go to every store where I knew she shopped. I desperately searched for some of the things that I knew she had, but that her husband kept. I found a set of her sheets and cried in the store. I keep them even though they no longer fit my deep mattress. I found a blouse EXACTLY LIKE ONE SHE HAD! I bought it and it still hangs in my closet in the original plastic. I couldn't bring myself to wear it. I even bought DISH CLOTHS that were like hers. I did this for months and months. One time I went into a nice Atlanta department store and found myself right in front of a store mannequin wearing a beautiful blue silk suit. It looked so much like Lisa and the things she wore that I had my first real public fit of hysteria. I had to run out of the store and out of the mall, screaming and crying all the way. I don't even know if people stared. I didn't care.

Well, I guess I've taken up enough space, but it was nice sharing this time of being "crazy" with you other sweet moms.

*Love,
Faye Martin, Lisa's mom forever
www.lisalamb3.com*

Faye has taken pictures of many of these precious things she received from Lisa and made a DVD so she will have this forever. It is a beautiful DVD with music.

Lisa's symbol is a lamb.

Al & Sandy Hickey's son, Paul (1-1-73) was killed in an auto accident, 11-21-99.

Al & Sandy have both changed jobs:

Dinah,

Thank you so much for remembering our Paul. Doesn't seem possible that it's been 9 yrs ago.

God has blessed us in so many ways; but the holidays are still a struggle.

Al and I have moved to Louisville. I now work for Kentucky Organ Donor Affiliates and it's a wonderful job to take me into retirement. Not as much stress. Al works for The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is actually starting a teacher education department for the under college "Boyce College." He retired from KY teaching.

Our trips to Williamsburg will be less now. Daddy died Oct. 15 - and he will be missed by not only his family but a multitude of friends.

God bless you and Jim. Hope you have a blessed Thanksgiving and Christmas. I thank God for your friendship.

Paul's symbol is a white butterfly.

Frank & Rose Fotia's son, Gregory (11-10-88) died, 10-13-00.

Frank & Rose founded the Children's Relief Fund. I hope you will read about this wonderful camp for differently-abled children.



childrens relief news
08-09.pdf

Gregory's symbol is a red balloon.

Christine Pollock's daughter, Deborah (12-7-84) died from an unknown cause, 9-12-04.

Hi girls,

I just wanted to say thanks very much to everyone who lit candles for Deborah, signed her guestbook, sent emails, made gifts and thought of us on Sunday, Deborah and Gordon's birthday.

The past few days have been really difficult as I know you all, unfortunately understand, I'm still having a hard time but slowly but surely I'll get there.

Kai was here on Sunday, so at least I got a little respite looking at his beautiful smile and playing with him.

Something strange though, while I was feeding him he did this thing with his hands, I can't really describe it kinda moved them back and forth in a kinda half circular motion...it struck me that Deborah did exactly the same thing when she was getting fed, I'd never noticed it before. A sign my angel was with us?

Love and hugs,

Christine Pollock

<http://www.rememberingdeborah.com/main/main.html>

Deborah's symbols are ballet slippers.

Joe & Debbie Kitchen's son, Chad (4-2-74) died from a gunshot to his head, 12-5-99.

Dinah

Thank- You so much for always remembering Chad. It means so much to me. I just got back from the cemetery. I decorated today for Christmas. It was so strange about what you said in his card about when the sun is shining that they are smiling upon us because as I stood there and decorated I would cry off and on. It seemed like every time that I quit crying the sun would shine brightly on me. You see it was about 30 degrees and snow flurries and very dreary so that is why I thought it was strange. I did not see

a guitar in the sky but I know he and Jim are watching over us. I feel though, that you are my guardian angel and I thank you for that. Please take good care and have a Merry Christmas.

Love Always

Debbie((((Chad&Jim)))) OUR ANGELS

Chad's symbol is a guitar.

David & Emma Keen's son, Jonathan (10-22-77) was killed in a trucking accident, 10-15-03.

Dinah,

I met last night (Dec. 14th) with my church's "secret sisters" for gift exchanges and refreshments at 5:30 P.M. Before I went to our get-together, David and I put up a 6-foot cut Scottish Pine at the cemetery for Jonathan; the tree smelled so good. Jonathan always loved live trees, so I used to always have one in the house during Christmas. I flocked his tree with snow and placed a big red bow on top of it with streamers down to the bottom of it. I also took his Christmas blanket arrangement, which has a deer in it, and I added a picture of little Emily for him. I took a small fiber optic battery-operated tree that flashes constantly and placed it by his headstone.

I stopped by his cross (where his accident was) and placed and lit a candle for him. I had decorated there earlier with a live wreath with a peppermint bow and had also placed a small flashing tree by his cross. I went back by the cross after my "secret sister" meeting and his candle was still burning at 8:30 P.M.

*I left a candle with an angel on my front deck for David to light at 7:00 P.M. So I guess we did have the **Christmas Box Angel** lighting together after all. I am happy to know that we "**Joined In Memory**" for this special event.*

Love to you Both,

J'sMandE'sN (Jonathan's Mom and Emily's Nana)

Emma

Jonathan's symbols are a smile and NASCAR.

HOLIDAY EATING TIPS

Avoid carrot and celery sticks. Anyone who puts those things on a holiday buffet table knows nothing of the Christmas spirit. In fact, if you see them, leave immediately and go next door where they're serving bourbon balls.

Drink as much eggnog as you can. And quickly. It's rare. You cannot find it any other time of year but now. So drink up! Who cares that it has 10,000 calories in every sip? It's not as if you're going to turn into an eggnog-alcoholic or something. It's a treat. Enjoy it. Have one for me. Have two. It's later than you think. It's Christmas!

If something comes with gravy, use it. That's the whole point of gravy. Gravy does not stand alone. Pour it on. Make a volcano out of your mashed potatoes. Fill it with gravy. Eat the volcano. Repeat.

As for mashed potatoes, always ask if they're made with skim milk or whole milk. If it's skim, pass. Why bother? It's like buying a sports car with an automatic transmission.

Do not have a snack before going to a party in an effort to control your eating. The whole point of going to a Christmas party is to eat other people's food for free. Lots of it. Hello?

Under no circumstances should you exercise between now and New Year's. You can do that in January when you have nothing else to do. This is the time for long naps, which you'll need after circling the buffet table while carrying a 10-pound plate of food and that vat of eggnog.

If you come across something really good at a buffet table, like frosted Christmas cookies in the shape and size of Santa, position yourself near them and don't budge. Have as many as you can before becoming the center of attention. They're like a beautiful pair of shoes. If you leave them behind, you're never going to see them again.

Same for pies. Apple, Pumpkin, Mincemeat. Have a slice of each. Or if you don't like mincemeat, have two apples and one pumpkin. Always have three. When else do you get to have more than one dessert?

Did someone mention fruitcake? Granted, it's loaded with the mandatory celebratory calories, but avoid it at all cost. I mean, you gotta have some standards.

One final tip: If you don't feel terrible when you leave the party or get up from the table, you haven't been paying attention. Re-read tips; start over, but hurry, January is just around the corner.

Remember this motto to live by:

"Life should NOT be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in an attractive and well preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, chocolate in one hand, body thoroughly used up, totally worn out and screaming "WOO HOO what a ride!"

Have a great holiday season!!

*May the Lord Bless and Watch over you and
your loved ones this Christmas*

*And may He prosper and bless the work of
your hands in the New Year*

My email address is: dinah@ucumberlands.edu

The web site's address is <http://www.ucumberlands.edu/lamentations/>