

LAMENTATIONS

Issue 126

middle

April, 2009

I resolve...

That I will grieve as much, and for as long, as I feel like grieving, and that I will not let others put a time table on my grief.

That I will grieve in whatever way I feel like grieving, and I will ignore those who try to tell me what I should or should not be feeling and how I should or should not be behaving.

I will not hold back my tears just because someone else feels I should be "brave" or "getting better" or "healing by now."

That I will talk about my child as often as I want to, and that I will not let others turn me off just because they can't deal with their own feelings.

That I will not expect family and friends to know how I feel, understanding that one who has not lost a child cannot possibly know how it feels.

That I will not blame myself for my child's death, and that I will constantly remind myself that I did the best job of parenting I could possibly have done. But when feelings of guilt are overwhelming, I will remind myself that this is a normal part of the grief process and it, too, will pass.

That I will not be afraid or ashamed to seek professional help if I feel it is necessary.

That I will commune with my child at least once a day in whatever way feels comfortable and natural to me, and that I won't feel compelled to

explain this communion to others or to justify or even discuss it with them.

That I will try to eat, sleep, and exercise every day in order to give my body the strength it will need to help me cope with my grief.

To know that I am not losing my mind, and I will remind myself that loss of memory, feelings of disorientation, lack of energy, and a sense of vulnerability are all normal parts of the grief process.

To know that I will heal, even though it may take a long time.

To let myself heal and not to feel guilty about feeling better.

To remind myself that the grief process is circuitous - that is, I will not make steady upward progress. And when I find myself slipping back into the old moods of despair and depression, I will tell myself that "slipping backward" is also a normal part of the grief process and these moods, too, will pass.

To try to be happy about something for some part of every day, knowing that at first, I may have to force myself to think cheerful thoughts, so eventually they may become a habit.

That I will reach out at times, and try to help someone else, knowing that helping others will help me to get over my depression.

That even though my child is dead, I will opt for life, knowing that is what my child would want me to do.

Nancy A. Mower

TCF - Honolulu, HI

Grief Grafts

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

Dinah,

Thank you for your emails. You are a real inspiration. I certainly hope you continue with the conferences. I couldn't really help much financially, but I would be glad to help in any other way that I could.

I hope you have a holiday season filled with peaceful moments and sweet memories.

My wish would be that no other parent ever have to endure the pain of losing a child. Unfortunately, I don't think that wish will come true, so my hope is that each mother finds a fellow traveler to help her along this journey. No one should travel this path alone.

Thank you and Rosemary for all the work you have done in the grief field. Young Jim, Drew and Jeremiah will live on in all the work the two of you have done. They have touched many lives.

Hugs,

Debra Reagan

www.clint-reagan.memory-of.com

Clint's symbol is a star.

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

Hope & Wish List

My hope and wish is that WE ALL take time in 2009 to seek out others less fortunate than we and do some type of random act of kindness for them.

Visit a shelter, a Veterans Hospital (they truly need our love and thank yous), visit a children hospital, adopt a family in need and provide

whatever you can. Remember those that provide service and tip when you can.

Send more prayers upward for our world and those around the globe that are the decision makers, warm the hearts of those that are void of love and understanding and open our eyes to what we as one single person can do to make a difference on this planet Earth.

A quote from Steve Tiller....

"Remember to watch out for each other as we cross the streets of life."

Jackie Searl

Alex's symbols are deer and fish. Dan's symbol is his dog Buddy.

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

I HOPE TO FIND A NEW PLACE TO MOVE INTO {BIGGER.} I HOPE MY DIVORCE TO BE FINAL AND OVER WITH THIS NEW YEAR. I WISH FOR EVERY GRIEVING PARENT TO FIND SOME PEACE IN THIS NEW YEAR. I HOPE MY DOCTOR WILL FIND MY HEALTH PROBLEM AND TAKE CARE OF THIS ONGOING THING. MOST OF ALL, I WISH FOR MY SON YOUNGEST SON, MY RANDY PETE, TO COME BACK HOME TO US. ITS OK TO DREAM ISNT IT? LOVE AND PEACE TO YOU ALL THIS SEASON AND INTO THE NEW YEAR.

ALI

--

Always Randy Pete's Mom in Missouri

mom2randy@gmail.com

Healing Parents are Fragile Be Kind. My Tears have made my Rainbow Somewhere over the Rainbow Randy waits for me.

<http://www.geocities.com/randymydrummerboy/index.html>

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

Randy's symbols are a rainbow, remote control car, an eagle and drums

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

Barbi wrote this poem:

*That's \$34.99," said the sales clerk with a smile.
"\$34.99," I repeat, "That sounds kinda high."*

*"We have less expensive ones," she said, as tears filled my eyes.
"Oh. No. Thanks. This one will be just fine."*

*I wish I were buying a video game, music or new clothes,
Instead I buy a Christmas wreath of greenery, pine cones and bows.*

*I stand and look at the wreath I have placed with such care,
cold winds slap my face, tears collide with rain soaked hair.*

*I marvel at the beauty of the Christmas wreath placed on the blanket of
snow.*

*I whisper, "Merry Christmas son. Why oh why," I question, "Did you want
to die?" And wonder, will I ever know.*

Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death in the state of Ky.

*Barbi Kinne; advocate for suicide prevention
"Not by chance, but by circumstance."*

I asked Barbi if I could print her poem. Her reply was:

*Sure Dinah, that's fine. I went to get Joe Frank's wreath on Saturday and I
started to cry. So this poem is what came from my thoughts. I shouldn't have
to buy a daggone wreath, shouldn't have to go to the cemetery, he should be
alive, he did not have to die. SUICIDE P***** ME OFF!!!!*

***'The will of God will never take you where the Grace of God will
not protect you.'***

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

Glen & Judy Cummins' son, Scott (7-26-71) was killed in a helicopter crash, 1-31-97.

Dear Dinah:

I am thankful for all the support and love you and Rosemary have given to me and other fellow travelers.

I am thankful for the hope God gives us in that we will join our loved ones who left us too early.

I am thankful for the life of my son, as short as it was. The joy and laughter he gave us.

I am thankful, that through our chance meeting, of the lasting friendship we now have.

And I am thankful for the conferences you have so graciously held, that were healing to all of us.

And I pray and wish for your better health.

May the future be filled with healing and hope.

Your Fellow Traveler

Glen

I emailed Glen to see if I could use his email:

Dinah,

Most certainly you can use what I wrote anyway you want. I am so thankful for all that you, Rosemary, and others have done to make our journey easier. We will always suffer the loss of our loved children, but the grief becomes much softer when others show real compassion and empathy.

I wish for you and Jim a healing and peaceful New Year.

Glen

Scott's symbols are an eagle and a helicopter.

Peter & Jo-Ann Maginnis' son, Peter (3-2-65) completed suicide, 9-20-02.

Dear Dinah,

First a very Peaceful Christmas...I have a wish list to send:

- 1. That someday I will see my grandchildren*
- 2. That no mother will ever suffer the pain of losing a child*
- 3. That this crazy world will wake up and peace will prevail*
- 4. That people will respect those in authority, like in the good old days*
- 5. That you, Dinah, will always be happy and at peace...you are a wonderful person...God Bless you*

Thank you...

Jo-Ann Maginnis

Peter's symbols are angel wings & a NYPD badge.

Donna Smith's son, Clyde Carr (8-9-82) died from Leukemia, 6-27-93.

Hello Dinah:

I'd like to take this time to wish you and all your family a very Merry Christmas. Once again, I would like to thank you for all that you have been to me for the past 15 years. You've touched me in ways that only I and God know. So one way that I am remembering this year's Christmas is to give honor where honor is due. I'm sure I can speak for many of the Fellow Travelers that you have been the most generous and thoughtful person to remember us and send us all the things that you have, cards, newsletters, information, and your love. Especially at times when we needed "something." I'm sure God has placed this ministry, that is the way I see it, in your heart. Because that is what you do, minister to the needs of others.

Thank you Dinah and Merry Christmas.

Donna Smith

Clyde's symbol is a teddy bear.

Mike & Kathi Mullens' son, Jeffrey Arnold (9-7-70) died from drowning, 8-17-97 and their granddaughter, Courtney (12-12-01) died of heart failure, 12-22-01.

I love Young Jim's Christmas tree. The last Christmas Jeff was alive, we had a live tree, it stands guard over our yard now and we decorate it for each holiday in some way.

*May you feel Young Jim all around you this Christmas,
Jeffrey's Mom & Courtney's Granny*

*Butterfly Kisses & Happy Trails
Mike & Kathi Mullins*

Jeffrey's symbols are a butterfly and an American Flag.

**Charlie & Kay Walton's sons, Tim (12-6-64) and Don (6-4-67),
died from carbon monoxide, 12-15-86.**

Charlie has written several books, articles, etc. You can see a list on the web site under "Recommended books, CDs, DVDs, etc."

WRITING SOMETIMES HELPS

by Charlie Walton

(Some Things I've Learned)

Writing sometimes helps. I have been amazed through the years that people who, way back in elementary school, were traumatized by some English teacher with merciless red grading pencil, traumatized into thinking that they could never write anything, will suddenly produce beautiful poems and other written sentiments in the process of remembering their children.

There is something therapeutic about putting things on paper, reading them over, changing a word here, adjusting on emphasis there, that really helps to focus the mind and get some of those inner feelings out where we can deal with them more effectively.

It works by the same principle as making a list when you've got more to do than you can hold in your mind. You know, when you think you have a hundred things to do and then you put that list down on paper, and suddenly

realized that you really only had seven things to do. It's just that they were swirling around in your head so fast that seven things looked like a hundred things.

So, consider writing down your feelings, if you haven't already. Don't worry about phrasing things for others to read. You don't need to start out shooting for publication. Just put some words on paper that work for you, words that feel good when you read them over to yourself.

Later, if your words help others when they are shared, that's good too. But for starters, just dump some of what's in your mind onto paper. Read it over, work it over, bathe it in tears until it feels good.

Writing doesn't necessarily work for everybody, but maybe pulling things out of your weary mind and onto a defenseless piece of paper can work for you.

A third thing I have learned over the years is that grieving people need to tell their stories more times than their friends or family members are going to be willing to hear those stories. That is perhaps the greatest value of The Compassionate Friends, a group of people who are not only willing to hear your story again and again, but will sincerely cry with you the twentieth time you tell that story just as they cried the first time you told it.

These are people who understand, people who listen intently, people who will even help you tell your story. I don't know if you have noticed it but if you are sitting in a circle telling what happened to you those who have heard the story lots of times will actually jump in and add a detail you might be leaving out. If there is a first-timer in the circle, the veterans may add explanations and clarifications for them.

It has become their story too. They have suffered your loss, They repeatedly provide the exact response you expected from the whole world. Do you remember your outrage of the world for continuing as though nothing had happened? Do you remember the urge to scream, "How can you go on like this? Don't you realize my world has ended?"

So, I praise The Compassion Friends, a group that meets a vital and normal need, the need for someone to listen with sincere interest as we re-tell our stories again and again.

On the other hand knowing that we need to tell our stories so many times should help us be a little more understanding toward friends and relatives who are reluctant to hear our stories again and again. They don't know that each re-telling is therapy. All they know is that you keep repeating things that make them hurt and they worry that you might be stuck in that story forever. People who have not been where you have been have no

concept of how long grief takes. They think it should end in some "respectable short time" after the funeral.

Kay and I still have some understanding, supportive friends who will come to us as December 15th approaches and say, "I remember that it was about this time of year that Tim and Don died and I want you to know that I am praying for your comfort and I want you to know that those two guys are very much remembered and missed." These are wonderful friends who have learned...sometime with a little training from us...that "Grief takes longer than one year."

Tim & Don's symbols are theatrical masks.

Reeny Fitzer's son, Dustin (8-24-76) died in a boating accident, 7-3-95. Her daughter, Becky (10-20-70), died from brain cancer, 7-30-05.

I had seen Reeny's web sites and asked if I could include her children on the web site under "Birth and Angel Dates" and "Fellow Travelers' Web sites."

Dear Dinah thank you for responding. I do have some symbols for my children. Dustin's is the white peace dove. I had a wild one visit me three days after I lost him and stayed on my fishpond on my patio. I now raise white doves in his honor. As for my Becky, I had won an oil painting award for Dustin's site not long before she died. The painting of Dustin arrived the day she died and he was holding a yellow rose in his hand. The artist had no idea that this was my daughter's favorite flower. The picture I sent of Dustin was a graduation picture. So I associate the yellow rose with my Becky. I felt as though Dustin was welcoming his sister to heaven in it. So now when I see a yellow rose, I am always reminded of my Becky.

Reeny Fitzer



Reeny's husband, Jim, died August 27 2006.

I hope you will visit their web sites:
Reeny Angels Dustin and Becky's Mom
Wife to Angel Ray
Main Site
<http://dustinfitzer.net> <<http://dustinfitzer.net/>>

New year's Page
<http://dustinfitzer.net/ny09/ny09.html>
New: <http://www.toheavenwithlove.com/>
<http://finditmall.com/grief/dir-grief.htm>

Dustin
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=8428229>
<http://dustin-fitzer.memory-of.com/> <<http://dustin-fitzer.memory-of.com/>>

Becky
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=11832675>
<http://becky-fitzer-groves.memory-of.com/> <<http://becky-fitzer-groves.memory-of.com/>>

RAY
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=28833213>
<http://Ray-Fitzer.virtual-memorials.com> <<http://ray-fitzer.virtual-memorials.com/>>

Love and hugs
Reeny

Dustin's symbol is a white peace dove and Becky's symbol is a yellow rose.

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

Paul was an organ donor and Sandy has also given a kidney to a person in her church.

Dinah,
Thank you for remembering.

Actually it's 8pm and we just returned from spending some time with Paul's heart. We celebrated Paul's birthday by visiting with his heart recipient in NC. Larry McEntire is doing great and still preaching the gospel. God continues to bless us.

God bless you and Jim in 2009.

Al & Sandy Hickey

Paul's symbol is a white butterfly.

Vanessa Webb's son, Corey (11-26-88) died after being struck by lightning at a sporting event, 3-29-07.

Hello Dinah

First of all I want to thank you so very much for all the e-mail and forwards that you have sent to me. I have been sick and not on the computer often. You asked me about a month ago how we started our Compassionate Friends group. It was thru the dedication of some mothers who want to help other mothers who unfortunately might have to go through this terrible pain that we endure. With about 7 mothers at the time, we asked the Compassionate Friends headquarters for the paperwork. At the time I was only 16 months into the grief of Corey. They told me that I had to wait until it was a least 18 months. At 18 months, I sent in our paperwork and we went from there. Two months later we were fully incorporated. We are building up our library and I often tell the women about "Children of the Dome" book. The book was so helpful to me and I know it will be for other women in the group. Again, I want to thank you. It is because of the dedication of women like you and Rosemary that I got the group started.

*Love from a fellow traveler,
Vanessa Webb*

Corey's symbols are a track runner with wings and a dime.

Greg & June Witty's only child, Jonathan (10-24-85) died in an auto accident, 6-7-02.

June wrote:

Thank you so much for sharing the poem and song. Greg and I still don't celebrate the holidays. It has been 6 years Jonathan has been gone but we just can't do it. We go to the cemetery and light a candle for him, and also at home. I don't feel any joy off anything anymore. Not even being around family. I lost my brother to cancer in August. There was a rainbow after his passing so I feel this was a sign. Also, after my mother passed, there was a double rainbow. The rainbow is my son's sign. Thank you for all the emails you send; it helps me to hear from you. Lots of love sent your way.

June Witty

I asked June if I could print her email and she replied:

Yes you may. I believe Jonathan shows me every way he can that he is alright and he is still there for me. Thank You for your e-mails.

Love,

June

Jonathan's symbols are a rainbow, star & 4-wheeler.

**Joe & Sherrie Higginbotham's daughter, Bethany (10-16-82)
died from a cancerous spinal cord tumor, 12-5-04.**

Dear Dinah,

Thank you for all your sweet emails but we especially appreciated the card you sent on our daughter's home-going anniversary date. Your ministry of comfort and compassion is without comparison and has deeply touched our lives. We certainly would want to be a part of another J.I.M.'s conference no matter what the scale and whatever year you choose to have it. If we can help in some way, please let us know.

Bethany was our pride and joy (her middle name was "Joy" and the tattoo she had on the small of her back, without our approval, was a purple butterfly with "Joy" underneath it) because she was such a special person. Extremely talented, she played many instruments but was gifted in violin and oboe. And she played despite a defect caused by her spinal cord tumor

which was first diagnosed in her 5th grade year. She had a small and weaker hand (she and her friends called it "gimpy"), arm, foot, leg and eye on her left side because of this tumor. Despite this, she limped through marching band as a row leader and participated on the tennis team for her high school. Though surgery was attempted that first time, the surgeon was unable to remove it because it was a calcified mass, about the size of one's pinkie fingernail, in the very center of the spinal cord. He felt it would leave her paralyzed if he attempted to remove it. It was later determined to be benign at that point and she lived with it for about 10 more years.

Then during her sophomore year in college, where she was studying nursing, she came home after Spring Break, during which she had served on a ministry team to a Native American Reservation, complaining of neck pain. Since her tumor is at the base of her neck, we went to the surgeon who saw her every year and did another MRI, one of dozens she had had since 5th grade and which always showed no change. But this one was different. For some reason, that benign tumor had changed to a malignant tumor and was growing up and out of her spinal cord. Surgery was quickly scheduled, which was followed by radiation and then chemo treatments of various kinds. But her deterioration was unstoppable yet gradual. In 18 months time, despite a third surgery at Johns Hopkins with the world's expert on spinal cord tumors, no one was able to comprehend what kind of tumor it was and no treatment stopped its advancement toward her brain stem. We watched our precious daughter move from a bubbly and vivacious young woman to a walker, to a wheelchair, as a paraplegic and finally as a quadriplegic.

Sherrie cared for her physical needs every night and every morning, spending hours cleaning, bathing, diapering, clothing and feeding her. We had help with her during the day so Sherrie could keep her job. Bethany was pumped with steroids for pain management and over those months gained almost 100 pounds. On Thanksgiving Day, we were trying to get her ready to take her in the van we had outfitted with a lift to take her in her wheel chair for a gathering with family. She had difficulty staying awake and when we checked her pulse, it was so weak we couldn't determine the HR. Her BP was so low we knew something was wrong. We got an ambulance and she was taken to ER. She never came home. She eventually went into a coma, from which she was only semi-lucid once. On that brief occasion, through blinking her eyes in affirmation, she gave me the answer to my question, "Are you ready to go see Jesus?" Several days later, we had to make the decision to remove her from life support and watched her

breathe her last breaths on Dec 5, 2004. It was a heart-wrenching but very holy occasion.

Thank you for remembering our grief and being such a comfort to us as well as so many more. You do such an honor to all our children's memories by your tender and compassionate efforts. May you be richly blessed and be given strength from above for your loving kindness.

*Much love and appreciation,
Joe and Sherrie Higginbotham
Parents of Bethany Joy, 10.16.82 - 12.05.04*

Bethany's symbol is a butterfly.

Betsy Crum's son, Gary Rodgers, II (1-11-67) died from cancer, 1-14-91.

Betsy has suffered another loss:

Dear Dinah,

Thank you for remembering Gary. This was a BAD Christmas. It has never been the same without Gary, but this is the first year without my husband Harold.

Also, I have been scheduled for Carotid artery surgery since last Feb., but Harold was so sick I just kept putting it off. I get dizzy or light headed and fall a lot. I have congestive heart failure and in Nov. it started getting worse and I had trouble breathing. I had angioplasty on my heart in Nov. so I would be well enough for the carotid artery surgery, but I got so light headed I fell and BROKE my leg (fibula) then was in hospital for congestive heart failure, and now finally I am back home trying not to fall while walking on these crutches. Next week I am going to call doctor and see if I can have the carotid surgery before my leg heals. I am so afraid I will fall again. I wanted to go out to the cemetery today and see Gary and Harold, but they are buried on a hill and I don't think I could walk there. It isn't very far and not very steep but I sure do have trouble walking on crutches.

Please keep me in your prayers and maybe by Harold's birthday which is April 5 I will have both arteries done and be able to go to cemetery.

Thank you again for remembering Gary's birthday. His name is in the snowflakes and in the lighted candles.

Sincerely, Betsy Crum (Gary Rodgers' mom)

Gary's symbol is a white dove.

Hamp & Saralyn Smith's son, Robbie (9-8-83) died from a brain tumor, 3-15-00.

Saralyn wrote this poem to Robbie for Valentine's Day:

Robbie - My Forever Love

*It isn't just at Valentine's
I think of you, my son,
It's every day in every way
Since your new life was begun.*

*You're with me when I rise each morn,
You're there throughout each day,
You're with me as I make my prayers,
In every word I say.*

*I know you come into my dreams,
Even when I don't recall,
For you've become a part of me,
The **Heart** of me, that's all!*

*You're with me more now than before,
Since now you live inside,
And you will live forever;
'Twas just a shell that died.*

*Some day I'll join you once again
In heaven up above,
You'll always be with me, sweet Rob,
You're my Forever Love!*

Written for Robbie with all my love,
Mom
(Saralyn McAfee Smith)
February 2009

Robbie's symbol is a train.

This email from Sandy Clendenen:

Hi Dinah, I wanted to let you know that I have decided to give my ebook away. It is How to Heal Grief. It is available on my site. www.movebeyondgrief.com. It is also available at www.howtohealgrief.com. And I have it available at www.YouPublish.com. I am suggesting that people make a donation to a charity that helps grievers. I will be sending out a newsletter about this, but just wanted to send you a personal email too. Please let anyone know who you think might be interested or might benefit.

Blessings.

sandy@movebeyondgrief.com

www.movebeyondgrief.com

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

Dear Dinah,

Thank you so much for remembering my son Kenny today, and also Thank You for sharing your beautiful poem to your precious angel, your son Jim...It is true, as I read the beautiful birthday poem, I thought how much pain you had as you wrote those words on Jim's birthday, then I realized that this poem applies to all who lost a child/children.

It seems that some years are harder to "Get Through" than others... Of course, the first is so painful that all our thoughts are full of the horrible shock of the loss of our child/children...the second brings the loss even farther for some because the total impact really begins to settle in that we will no longer, here on earth, see or touch our children...the third brings an over-bearing thought of wanting to hear them say "Hi I'm Home," although

we go through this every day and every moment from the first day, but for some reason the third year without our child/children seems to be the one where the very sound of them not talking to us hurt us so much...

The fourth year seems to somehow bring a smile, we can begin to hear our own laughter come back to us, a gift from our child/children I think Oh, don't get me wrong there are moments we find ourselves smiling and even laughing, but we do seem to be more in "tune" to the sound of our own laughter in the fourth year. Maybe it's when we once again can see the world around us through our children's eyes; the outside world somehow starts to open up again...

The fifth year brings a terrible pain, like a marker letting us know that time is passing and we have to stop everything to hold onto the moment we heard our children's laughter last. We begin to understand in the fifth year that forever we will grieve and the grief will come and knock us to our knees once again and as we slowly recover from the pain we understand, with an understanding we never had before, that "this thing, this grief" we carry will come to us night and day whenever it wants to and we understand how to live with and move it aside when we need to and we learn to nurture it when we need to...

In the sixth year we begin to see "How Far We Came." We look back on the years past and begin to ask ourselves "How did we get this far?" We look over our shoulders (of pain and sorrow) and ask "Have I Helped Someone else that is grieving" and often the answer is YES we have, We begin to know Really what the words "Been there, Done That" really mean and we understand in that sixth year that without help and compassion for others we would have never gotten to this moment. Because it was through the help and compassion others have given us (and sometimes even carried us through the years) all those who have walked this walk before us have done for us that we begin to embrace the grief and say to ourselves "How can we help someone else."

Oh yes, many times in the earlier years we helped someone, but it is in that 6th year that we understand that we are here still because life does have some kind of meaning for all of us to somehow share and be shared with...

The seventh year brings us to another moment of wondering. Although we have often spent time wondering it seems that that seventh year brings so much to the top of our minds like Wondering what would our child/children look like? Wondering what would our child be doing with his/her life? Wondering if the earlier school years were (or would have been) fun for them? Wondering if they graduated high school/college? Wondering what jobs would they have chosen in their lives? Wondering if they would've

gotten married? Wondering what their child/children would look like? Wondering how their child/children are doing? And all the other questions that will forever go unanswered we find ourselves wondering about more often in that seventh year...

The eighth year brings a little peace to us as we find that we are more involved in life and other people, We find that we still have moments of deep grief that we now know we MUST surrender to, for sanity's sake we must take our moments and put aside life just to breath in our heart the child we know lives in Heaven. We learned how to juggle life and grief, we have become masters somewhat of how to wear that "Mask" well, when to wait for the "right" moment to "FEEL" what we know we must feel and cry because we know we still must cry, Yes, that eighth year we begin to "Wear That Mask Well." Oh and by the way, we also learn in that eighth year wearing the mask and putting on a good front helps others be strong, although we learned this earlier, we do seem to know it better as we are in that eighth year....

The ninth year we again look back and understand that through all those years before, we have indeed spent grieving the most horrendous loss anyone can ever bear. We, too, have celebrated our child/children's life. We have somehow and in some way let the world, our world as well as the "outside world" know our child/children LIVED. We look back knowing that we did what we could and what we will continue to do to let the world know our child/children was a part of this world even those children who only live a moment or the little ones who never got to breathe in this world at all. We will not give in or give up on letting the world know we are proud of the beautiful creation we were a part of. Our Wonderful Children, who have impacted our lives so much that we will spend the rest of our lives thinking about. The wonderful beings that they were and still are, OH yes in that ninth year many reflections of our children's lives we know lives on...

And here I am in the tenth year. Ten Septembers, Halloweens, Thanksgivings, Christmas's, New Years, And Kenny's 27th Birthday missing, loving, and wanting my son to touch again. I can't look back yet and say what this year has taught me yet because I'm still muddling through it, but I can say it's another marker of some kind that has presented itself with a lot of pain. The tenth year so far just hurts. I'm sure we all know this feeling of deep hurt because no matter what year of missing your child/children you're in, you know that you don't know what you felt until it has passed and you can then look back and ask "What have I learned this year?" ...Well all I can say about this 10th year is it HURTS SOoooo Bad!!!! One thing I know for sure is that I have felt this way b4 for Many Years!!!!

All My Love And Blessings To You (((((Dinah)))))) for listening and reading this, I guess I just needed a moment of your time, I will surely give a moment to another Mom in return..."I'll Pay It Forward" as they say.

Love,

Cathy ^Kenny^ & Buffy's Mom

<http://memoriesofkenny.homestead.com/Kennys27thBirthday.html>

Kenny's symbol is a butterfly.

Gary & Angela Wilkins' son, Kyle (3-1-78) died from unknown causes, 1-7-96.

Angela shares her "Thankful List:"

Dinah, thank you for remembering Kyle's 13th Heaven date tomorrow (Jan. 7). I've been working on my Thanks List on and off for several weeks. Here it is:

Angela's Thankful List

1. So very thankful I am a Catholic Christian, with the Trinity helping me navigate the rest of my life.

I can't imagine being an atheist....how could there be nothing left after this life? Without God, Kyle's life and death would be senseless. Quite often during those horrible nights 1st year after Kyle died, I would beg Blessed Mother Mary to help me survive. She knew better than I the excruciating pain of losing a child.

2. So very thankful for my Christian friends, who share their Faith Journey stories with me. They help me have broader, clearer visions of being a true Christian. I've visited many churches, and felt God was there in each of them. My husband's Methodist pastor is my second priest, as Jack is so steeped in knowledge about The Bible, religious history, and how to practically live today as a Christian.

3. So very thankful for my family - both those in Heaven and those with me on Earth.

4. So very thankful for my friends, especially my Compassionate Ones.

5. So very thankful for being an American.

6. *So very thankful for my health, even when there are challenges (like today's sinus infections)*
 7. *So very thankful for chances to contribute to others, ways to give as well as receive.*
 8. *So very thankful for diversity, including our new biracial President.*
 9. *So very thankful for beauty, which God placed everywhere for us to find.*
 10. *So very thankful for humor - smiles make the soul sing.*
- Angela Wilkins

Kyle's symbols are musical notes.

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

Thank you so much Dinah, you are so kind to remember my Jason's special day. I fixed a favorite meal of his, lasagna, and took it to my other son and his family and we were together. Prior to the meal my son went to the cemetery with me and we shoveled a path through the snow and cleared off the gravesite. The headstone was also partially covered with snow. Jason would like the fact that we were there together caring for his grave. Helium balloons don't do very well in the cold and wind so I took pinwheels to decorate the grave as best I could dealing with all the snow. Another bright spot of the day was receiving a call from Jason's daughter (she was a passenger in the car that took Jason's life). It was important to her to know the exact time of his birth so she could celebrate at that particular time today. Jason had 3 children and I spoke to them all, but the oldest one remembers him the best as she was 6 years old and is 9 now. She is involved in a spelling bee and has surpassed two rounds; I will be in the audience for the next round (as the others were not for 'visitors') on this coming Tuesday. Her Daddy would be so proud of her and I reminded her of that fact. Her comment was, "I know Grandma...we were best friends!"

As you very well know it's a tough day for me, but getting messages such as yours make me smile; especially since I KNOW you understand fully.

Hugs to you!

Kathy Southard & Bill

Jason's symbol is a sun.

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

Charlotte is always active in grief work:

Dear Dinah,

You just will never believe what happened yesterday. It still seems surreal to me.

I got a call from the Pentagon yesterday! I had no idea who was calling - - I thought it was someone from Fort Campbell because I had called there to see if a groundbreaking ceremony was open to the public because I wanted to go.

I told the caller that I had changed my mind about going and she acted very surprised. She told me that she had e-mailed me the day before that Admiral Michael Mullen (the highest ranking military officer in America and the Joint Chief's Chair) and his wife and Commander Fish with the U.S. Navy expected to meet with me and that his wife and Commander Fish had scheduled thirty minutes to talk with me following the ceremony. Only then did I realize that I was getting a call from the Pentagon. I had erased all messages believing them to be spam! I was told that Admiral Mullen was very interested in what I have been doing in trying to create awareness that the bereaved need help, support and understanding that they most often do not get, and trying to educate others how to help.

When I realized what they were telling me, I told them that I would go to the ends of the earth to get there. And Dinah, that it what it felt like - - the end of the earth that touches Heaven. After 12 years (today) of 99% of the people I talked to not really caring about what I'm trying to do -- and yesterday 100% of everyone there truly cared about what I'm doing! My car broke down after 45 minutes on the road. A state trooper took us (Brian and me) to Fort Campbell. A policeman met us who called the Pentagon and within two minutes the policeman escorted us to where Admiral Mullen and his staff would be. The policeman returned for us and contacted a state trooper to take us back to my car and tried to help start it. The Pentagon caller had given me specific instructions about getting right to this group and told me they were expecting me and I simply needed to tell them I am

Charlotte Martin. Instead, they found me. I began looking for the policeman who dropped us off, but he returned for us. Soldiers told me not to worry - - that they would get us back home. The soldiers care about what I'm doing because they know that one day their parents may need the kind of help I'm trying to create. The families cared because they know that one day they may need the help. So do the policemen and state troopers. And so does the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy!

Admiral Mullen's wife asked me to send them a copy of my video and assured me they were anxious to see it! I have never been so unprepared for anything! But I believe our 30-minute talk was very good.

I told you about our local newspaper that told me that I need to find another venue to try to create help for grieving individuals. I kept saying "If God be for me, who can be against me". AND THEN THE PENTAGON CALLS. This had to have been God - - I mean how many civilians get a call from the Pentagon and say Admiral Mullen is wanting to meet them? I told them that I was accustomed to rejection 99% of the time. They assured me that I would have a very captive audience and they were right.

Of course, the fall back to earth is a hard one - - especially today.

Love you,

Charlotte Martin

Dear Dinah,

I do believe the results will be significant, but not in the way that many people seem to believe - - like that there will be future meetings for me. I doubt that seriously and believe this was a once-in-a-lifetime event. The only thing that I can imagine happening with the military is this: IF they like my video, then I would give them the rights to copy it and give it to military families who have had a loved one to die at war. I had always hoped to be able to do that, anyway.

The results so far have been this: Bob Robey, who is in my video, has written a manuscript regarding suicide prevention. He told me that Kentucky is the only state that has begun training families, friends and girlfriends how to detect in a letter or phone call that a veteran may be considering suicide and educating them about what to do. He told me that he already had his foot in the door with the military to some extent in that he had trained in suicide prevention on several U.S. Army bases. He told me, however, that the door had not been opened to Admiral Mullen's office, so while the door was open, he wrote them a letter and told them how he had stood by me

when I attempted suicide. He then enclosed his manuscript and told them that they could have the copyright to it and tweak it for military purposes.

Someone else asked me if I would be willing to send a video to Admiral Mullen that their friend produced about veterans who have died in Iraq. I trust their judgment about it being very good, but she's going to send me a copy to view. Of course, I will send it. At the time I didn't think to ask if they would be willing to let the military copy it to give or show to military families, but I will.

So, while the door is open I will let anyone who has been trying to help in suicide prevention or helping the bereaved through. Before the ice storm I knew how many veterans have died at war, but I haven't even read the newspaper for days now, nor have I gotten to watch much television news. But as you and I know, when we're grieving, we often get the feeling that others just do not care. So the more people who show Admiral how much some of us care, the better I believe - - and they can then relay that to bereaved families whose loved ones have died in the military.

Deborah Mullen told me about a friend of hers whose child died four years ago and that it had been as though she spent four years in a dense fog. Recently her friend told her that she thought she was coming out of the fog and wanted to do something to help. Would you and Rosemary do what you do when you learn about a grieving mom from another grieving mom? Perhaps Rosemary may want to send her a DVD. I will try to e-mail her - - or you may talk to her before I do. Sometimes I have trouble getting e-mail messages to her, and most often they come back as not getting through.

And of course, if you just might - - happen to be - - thinking of having ONE VERY LAST CONFERENCE, you could invite them. I talked with Mary Jo Harrison a few days ago and she asked if I knew, and she said SURELY there will be something. You do know that most people would come - - even without all the planning and work - - just to come to meet and talk to each other, don't you? If my mom were not so sick, I would try to have something here again. We did a very small scale picnic, compared to what you do, two years in a row, but did nothing the last three years.

I was asked to come to the Compassionate Friends meeting tonight and tell about my meeting at Fort Campbell. They said they didn't want to hear about it on the phone, but wanted to see me face to face. So, I'm planning to go to that.

Another result is the take that others have on this story. No doubt, military families know about Admiral Mullen and Deborah and how much they care about grieving families of fallen soldiers, but few civilians do.

That has been the comment most often made: "These people must genuinely care about the families, also".

Last, but not least - - someone locally is putting me in touch with a film producer to talk about doing a feature-length film about my story. And it will end with my call from the Pentagon and resulting meeting.

Just as I "knew" that I would produce a video, even though I didn't have a clue how I was going to do it, I "know" that there will be a movie, even though I don't have a clue how it will come to be.

It's funny that you said I'm a saint to be doing all the work I do. Someone said that I'm a cross between Mother Theresa and Erin Brockovich, and a hellofawholelotmore like Erin Brockovich. Bob Robey is always telling me to be patient and let God open the doors. I tell him that he can be patient, but I'm going to knock the doors down and then see if God is behind me. I haven't told you the entire story, but when God opened this door, I first said "I'm not going through. It's too much trouble."

As always, you never see the funny side of a story until friends start laughing when you're telling it. I'll tell you later, but Mom needs my attention now.

*Love you,
Charlotte Martin*

Keith's symbol is a karate angel.

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

Jeanne wrote to say that she was changing Nick's symbol:

I would really like to change my son's sign from a butterfly to a rainbow. Haven't understood it all for 4 years. Am thinking I do now. I chose a butterfly because I did not know what to do. But as I see my son, I see him as a rainbow. He is and has always been a rainbow. I just was so numb and didn't know what to say. He was always happy, loved everyone and everyone loved him; always a smile on his face no matter what. Even if he messed up and struck out in baseball, the smile never ended. And now I see him as a rainbow. Because the smile never ended.....the good and the friend that he was to so many people never ended...that is my rainbow, my

son. I miss him so much. I sat here tonight and looked at the album that I gave him when he graduated from high school. From pre-school on. All of the pics, all of the report cards all of the bus violations!!! All of his achievements... All of his pics. I miss him so much; there are no words to describe how bad my heart aches. Even though it has been 4 years. I used to think I wish I could get to four years I would feel so much better. Doesn't work. I just want him to be a rainbow. Because that is what he is...Every day of my life.

*Thanks,
Jeanne*

Nick's symbol is now a rainbow.

(I think our children do evolve and so may their symbol(s).

Chris & Naomie Carter have lost 2 sons to death. Chris (7-10-84) completed suicide, 3-5-08. Josh (8-17-86) died in an auto accident, 5-28-08.

This family has had to face so much tragedy in less than a year. I received a request from Naomie about the newsletters:

Hi Dinah,

Thank you for responding to my email. I would love to share my sons with you:

***Christopher "Chris" J. Carmello** was born 7/10/1984; the best day of my life; I finally had a child of my own. Chris had to grow up too fast, being the oldest of 4 kinda did him in. He was funny and liked to stay to himself, yet light up a room when he entered. Chris always worried about others before himself. He has lived on his own since he was 17. I had no idea he was suffering from depression. No one knew, even those closest to him. He took his own life and ended the pain on 3/5/2008; the worst day of my life...or so I thought.*

***Joshua "Josh" M. LeJeune** was born on 8/17/1986 and he was also a blessing. Josh was so big and beautiful and continued to grow into quite a man. Josh was very funny and responsible. He went into the Air Force in 2004 after graduation and had made a nice life for himself. We were all so*

proud of him. He took his brother's death very hard. Josh was to move back to Vegas. He died on May 28, 2008 in a single car accident. Josh was just back state-side about 3 weeks from Korea. The 2nd worst day of my life. I was still in shock over Chris, now Josh too.

How does a person, a mother grieve for 1 child, much less two? I do it with my faith in God. That is where my true strength comes from. Other moms tell me how much they admire my strength and will to go on, I tell them it is not me but God working in my life. I do not want any credit for it.

I recently had another loss of a child close to the family, my 3rd son, Mitchel's best friend since 6th grade, Robert "Rob" St. Pierre died on 3/17/09, in a work-related drowning accident. I knew for sure that I was losing another son, yet he is still here with us. He has a girl friend named Angel, she has truly lived up to her name. Rob was born 8/18/1988. He was only 20 yrs old and what a character. I have kept in close contact with his mom to make sure she is ok.

Thank you for listening, my sons are definitely my favorite topic. I will definitely visit your website as often as I can, and get to know your son, Jim.

*Take care & God bless,
Naomie Carter*

Chris' symbol is a butterfly and Josh's is a young man in a military dress uniform.

Karen Cantrell shares her thoughts from the fourth regional conference of The Compassionate Friends:

After Conference Thoughts

In the wake of the fourth regional conference for our chapter to host, it seems fitting to reflect. Our chapter was barely a year old when we discussed the possibility of organizing a conference for bereaved parents. Dinah Taylor had hosted "J.I.M.'s" conference for years in Williamsburg, Kentucky and decided to discontinue. We knew we would all miss the annual gathering so that gave us more of an incentive to organize an event. Our steering committee was committed even though our chapter was just a year old. Looking back now, we wonder how we did it being so new.

We had such a wonderful response to the first conference we decided to hold it annually for now. We have grown from an event of straight “talks” designed for all parents and catered sack lunches, to a program offering workshops, with sit down dinners. All of our speakers, performers and workshop leaders have been outstanding. Each year you wonder how you can stay up to par with the previous year but it happens. This conference, was more comfortable seating with the tables and sit down dinner according to most of the guests that we had feedback from.

Our guest speaker/performer Paul Alexander was absolutely wonderful as he sang his music that resounded with our hearts. Paul’s music is so touching no matter where you are at in your grief journey. Dr. Bill Ritter, opened our conference with his words of wisdom he had to share. Dr. Ritter and his wife were such a pleasure to get to know and his comforting words were well received. Our many workshops in the morning gave our guests several topics to choose from. Our workshop leaders tried to present their information in a clear, precise manner but with sincerity and compassion. Kudo’s to all of you for stepping up and taking on the challenge. Some of our workshop leaders had never presented before in this type of setting. We are grateful that they joined to help us. Sherry Russell, gave the noon hour talk explaining to us the differences of grief in the family. Many good points were brought out that will be helpful to you whether you are new to this journey or seasoned traveler. Alice Wisler closed the conference with an encouraging talk that helped us see the need to reach out to others, take the information we have learned and apply it in our own lives to help ourselves as well.

We are grateful for First Christian Church along with the many, many volunteers that pitched in to help before, during and after the conference. Most of all we are thankful that you chose to spend your weekend here with us at this conference. Without you, the conference would not have been successful. Our hope is that something was shared that made a difference in your grief whether it was from the program or the bereaved parent sitting beside you.

Karen’s son, Jacob Hutcheson’s symbol is a 4-wheeler.

David & Cindy Jo Greever's daughter, Michelle (8-24-84) was struck by an auto, 11-5-93.

Cindy Jo wrote this poem to Michelle:

*Time has come and gone since you went away,
Sixteen years and yet yesterday..*

*Your precious sweet smile still lingers,
In my heart I caress your auburn silk with my fingers~*

*I touch your cheek with a kiss,
And look into your sparkly green eyes I so miss~*

*I hug you and embrace your very being
For this moment it is you I am truly seeing..*

*Time has stood still, time has flown by,
I have laughed for the good times and Lord knows I have cried~*

*For now we celebrate Easter once again,
To remind us of our rebirth to this promised Land..*

*The flowers are blooming, they are merry
Reminding us forever life to be cherished...*

*The sun is shining, the birds sweetly singing in flight,
Our Mother Nature has all come to light..*

*God our Father has come and said, Take my Hand...
I will give you life, forever we shall Stand...*

*Life goes on, it does not end,
One day my daughter I will see you again...*

*Love Forever and Always
Mama*

HAPPY EASTER MY DARLING

~DAUGHTER~

4/7/09

© CindyJo Greever

**Michelle's symbols are a five-pointed star with a heart
and a flower in the center of the star.**

**Paula Hardin's son, Jeremy (3-24-75) fell from a bridge while
climbing, 9-5-94.**

Paula wrote the following:

Dear Dinah,

Thank you once again for thinking of me on Jeremy's birthday. This would have been his 34th. I miss him as much as always as I'm sure you do young Jim. I'm more at peace most days just knowing he's not really that far away and the day is coming ever sooner when I'll get to see him face to face.

I keep a picture of Jeremy taped to the inside of one of my kitchen cabinet doors so I see it every time I reach for a plate or bowl. In this picture he is standing by his car waving to me on the back porch as he gets ready to leave for his high school graduation. He's got a huge smile on his face and every inch of him is full of life. I yell back to him in my head "see you later, Jer," just like I did the day the picture was taken. And just like that day, I smile and know that it is true.

God bless you, my friend,

Paula

Jeremy's symbols are a star and drama masks.

**Dave & Ellen Culbertson's son, Carl () died from a heroin
overdose, 2-15-09.**

A fellow traveler sent me the Culbertsons' names and asked that I write them. Dave emailed me about Carl and what they are doing in his memory:

Dinah,

Thanks for writing...Here's a shorter version if you'd like to use it. Yes, you are more than welcome to spread the word. We also have wrist bracelets to help raise funds.

Here's the shorter version:

On Feb. 15, 2009, my wife, Ellen and I, lost a son to an accidental heroin overdose. We live in Mount Vernon, OH, typical Small Town America.

Carl, 27, was a good son. He was active in sports, good in school, a witty sense of humor; very intelligent, and very popular. He could have been anyone's son, brother, nephew or grandson. Following high school, he battled addictions for 8 yrs.

Heroin & other drug use is rampant throughout Small Town America. Oprah just did a second show about our area.

We've started an outreach program in Carl's honor & interest is snowballing. We have founded the Arms of an Angel Foundation as an outreach to youth & parents about the evils of drugs and drug addiction, with a special emphasis on Small Town America. We want to develop positive strategies to drug use for parents and youth...things to help them feel good about themselves & to encourage positive peer pressure.

We are reaching out to other families and people who have suffered similar losses & hope to tap their specialties, skills & resources.

I'm available to speak to any group, any media show, any newspaper, school or parents group.

We envision using the magnetic power of sports & entertainment celebrities to reach out to youth, to assist with fundraisers, or to donate items for our benefit auctions or to speak to groups with us. Please keep us in mind. If we do a fundraising event together, perhaps an arrangement could be made to split the proceeds between our charity and your favorite charity.

We are doing this so our son Carl's loss will not be in vain, as well as the thousands of other lost loved ones to the ravages of drug addiction. If we save one family from going through what we just went through with the loss of our son, Carl, to accidental heroin overdose, it will be worth it...but we don't want to stop there...we want to help thousands of families in the coming years, nationwide.

Open to suggestions on directions our organization should take and other ways to help. Feel free to e-mail this to any people or media you can think of..

*Bless you,
Dave Culbertson
www.ArmsOfAnAngel.org (under construction)*

*Reaching out to "Small Town America"...and beyond.
Arms of an Angel Foundation
Dave & Ellen Culbertson
PO Box 1091
Mount Vernon, OH 43050
(740)485-1641*

I hope you will give the Culbertsons encouragement and suggestions

Carl's symbol.

**Don't tell me your age; you probably would tell a falsehood anyway -but the Hershey Man will know!
YOUR AGE BY CHOCOLATE MATH**

This is pretty neat.

DON'T CHEAT BY SCROLLING DOWN FIRST!

It takes less than a minute.

Work this out as you read.

Be sure you don't read the bottom until you've worked it out!

This is not one of those waste of time things, it's fun.

1. First of all, pick the number of times a week that you would like to have chocolate (more than once but fewer than 10)

2. Multiply this number by 2 (just to be bold)

3. Add 5

4. Multiply it by 50 -- I'll wait while you get the calculator

**5. If you have already had your birthday this year add 1759 ...
If you haven't, add 1758.**

6. Now subtract the four digit year that you were born.

You should have a three digit number

The first digit of this was your original number (i.e., how many times you want to have chocolate each week).

The next two numbers are

YOUR AGE! (Oh YES, it is!!!!!!)

***THIS IS THE ONLY YEAR (2009) IT WILL EVER WORK, SO SPREAD IT AROUND WHILE IT LASTS.
chocolate Calculator.***

My email address is: dinah@ucumberlands.edu

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