

LAMENTATIONS

Issue 15

S.U.C.C.E.S.S

February, 1994

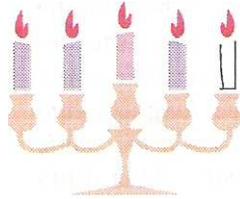


Winter begins December 21. Winter certainly represents our grief. It is the cold reality of our loved one's death that is so hard for us to accept. But, we must *lean into our* grief just as we lean into the cold, biting wind of a northeasterly. We can use *antifreeze* that will help us to keep from *freezing* in our grief. This *antifreeze* can be reading about grief, writing, keeping a journal, talking with others who truly understand our grief, and/or keeping in touch with fellow travelers. If you need some *antifreeze*, pick up the telephone and call one of us Fellow Travelers.



December is a difficult month to get through. We would like to be able to blink our eyes and have it over, but we do not have that power.

Now that we have lost such a precious loved one, we ask, "Why does there have to be a Christmas?" Even if we don't choose to observe it, others will, and I truly believe we need to "celebrate" this season with our surviving family members. We are alive, and at some point we have to join the living. That does not mean that we have to forget our loved one. On the contrary, we can include them in our celebration.



The Advent season begins the fourth Sunday before Christmas. Advent means *a coming* or *arrival*. This year Advent began on November 27. I would like to encourage each of you to have an Advent candle arrangement and burn the appropriate candle each Sunday, or each day of the Advent season. A candle gives light to those that are in the dark, and surely we are in the dark with our grief. But the light will show us the way to our S.U.C.C.E.S.S.



The first candle of Advent is purple and it represents *Hope*. The second candle is also purple and it symbolizes *Peace*. The third candle is pink and it denotes *Joy*. The fourth candle is purple and it signifies *Love*. And the last candle, which is lit on Christmas day, personifies *Christ*. This candle is in the center of the Advent wreath. I would like to suggest that we each light a green candle on Christmas Eve for our loved one. The green will be symbolic of our growing and working through our grief. This will be a remembrance.

I feel that we are here on earth for a purpose and it is important that we find some way of trying to make this world a better place for as many as possible. Perhaps you can help someone that is in great need. That may mean with money, with gifts, or just a listening ear. I have found

that when I am helping others, I have less time to concentrate on my own heartaches. Jim has often said that *if you don't think everyone has problems, then you just don't know them*. I believe that is true, and we can make someone's heartaches less if we help in some way. And, as a result, it also helps us. Christmas is the season for giving, and the greatest gift we can give anyone is ourselves. But, let me hasten to say that you must not over-extend yourself. It is a difficult time of the year, and you will need extra energy to carry you through the roughest days.

In Meg Woodson's book, **The Toughest Days of Grief**, she suggests that we talk about our loved ones at Christmas because it is a way of having them *home for Christmas*. Another suggestion is to hang a stocking with your loved one's name on it, and to suggest that family and friends leave notes to them.

There is a saying: *Each time a bell rings, Heaven has a new Angel*. For the past two Christmases, we have had an *Angel tree* in our foyer. It is covered with Angels and many have the names of our children on them. I hope you will decorate a tree according to your interests and those of your loved ones.



Grief Grafts

Last year, Michael and Susan Kauffman's family remembered their daughter, Kristie, by erecting a 4-foot, wire-framed angel in their front yard. This is a quote from an interview in the Courier-Journal: It's just our way of saying, "Kristie, you're still with us and you always will be. We Jove yon. Let everyone know she will never, ever, ever be forgotten and will always be a part of everything that we do. And this is just a way to show it." Kristie died from a congenital heart problem, 3-6-93. Kristie's symbol is an angel.



Kellie, the 16-year-old daughter of Dennis and Judy Carpenter, was killed in an auto accident with her best friend, Carrie, 8-14-92. Last Christmas the Carpenters decorated a Christmas tree with angels, musical notes, butterflies, etc. to represent Kellie's life. They also had 2 gold butterflies in a tree in their yard with white lights around them for Kellie and Carrie. Kellie's symbol is a butterfly.



Gary and Chris Barker decorated a special place in their family room last Christmas in memory of Jason, their 15-year-old son who was killed on his bicycle, 8-31-92. The focal point was Jason's little tabletop Christmas tree which he decorated for his room each year since he was 5 years old. The family decorated it the way he would have-the beautiful along with the gaudy. They placed numerous mementos around the base of the tree. They also included many photos and some of his school annuals. The Barkers did this to encourage their visitors to share their special memories of Jason. Jason's symbol is a butterfly.



Mollie Burkett's son, Jim, was killed in an automobile accident, 4-11-94. Twenty-one years ago, Mollie gave her five sons a cross with the poem, *The Cross in my Pocket*. About 6 months before Jim's death, he was in the hospital. One of his daughters had something in her closed hand. When Mollie asked her what it was, she responded: *Oh it's that little cross you gave my Daddy a long time ago and I'm afraid he'll get it lost while he is in the hospital*. After Jim's death, Mollie asked his wife if he had the cross in his pocket, and she said that he had lost it once and had searched the house until he found it, and had carried it all the time.

The Cross in my Pocket

*I carry a cross in my pocket
A simple reminder to me
Of the fact that I am a Christian
No matter where I may be.*

*This little cross is not magic
Nor is it a good luck charm
It isn't meant to protect me
From every physical harm.*

*It's not for identification
For all the world to see
It's simply an understanding
Between my Savior and me.*

*When I put my hand in my
pocket to bring out a coin or key
The Cross is there to remind me
Of the price He paid for me.*

*It reminds me too, to be thankful
For my blessings day by day
And to strive to serve Him better
In all that I do and say.*

*It's also a daily reminder
Of the peace and comfort I share
With all who know my Master
And give themselves to His care.*

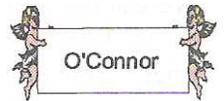
*So, I carry a cross in my pocket
Reminding no one but me
That Jesus Christ is Lord of my
life
If only I'll let Him be.
-Verna Thomas*

Jim's symbol is a cross.



Denis (8-2-86) and Peggy (8-6-86) O'Connor died as the result of an automobile accident. Their parents, Joe and Elaine Stillwell have remembered them in many ways. Elaine wrote: *Keeping busy kept me going. As Christmas approached, I bought a few presents for Joe and Annie (their daughter), but my concentration was on buying and mailing angels of all sorts, to my children's roommates at college and best friends and relatives and my friends. It gave my heart joy to know that each angel had my Peggy and Denis' names and dates on it so that each year as our friends decorated their Christmas trees, they would remember them. Now, seven years later, some dear friends have 7 angels on their tree and some still have just their special 1987 one. . . So you see, angels have been very therapeutic for me.*

Denis and
Peggy's symbols
are angels.



Brandon, the 16-year-old son of Dennis and Linda Holbrook, was killed in an automobile accident, 6-17-93. Last Christmas, the family sent Christmas cards with a crocheted snowflake and this poem:

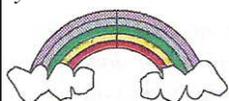
Each Life is Like a Snowflake

Our life and a snowflake are so much alike. Each one that is created is totally different and unique. It may have characteristics of all the rest, but something will make it special, whether shape, or duration.

As snowflakes fall from the sky, they do not know what path may lie ahead Some may fall and melt as soon as they touch the ground Others will vanish before they even touch the ground Some are fortunate enough to come at just the right time and last for days, weeks, months, or years.

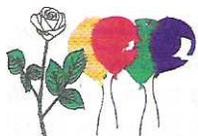
Brandon's snowflake was indeed unique and beautiful, although the path it chose to follow did not endure as long as WE would have liked However, how fortunate we are that his snowflake lasted long enough to make a difference to others.

This snowflake was handmade with love as a symbol of Brandon's short life. Please hang this on your Christmas tree and each year as you hang it, thank God that your snowflake was blessed for another year.



Brandon's symbol is a rainbow.

Ron and Louise Barger's 17-year-old daughter, Rhonda, died as the result of an automobile accident, 9-5-92. Last year the family decorated a small tree and placed it on her grave because Rhonda always had her own little tree in her room. Rhonda's symbols are balloons and a white rose.

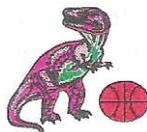


Mitch, the 8-year-old son of Dave and Carol Warren, died in an automobile accident, 3-21-93. The family wrote a letter with a letterhead of stars, and shared these words with their friends last Christmas. They wrote: *Our family picture is missing a big piece this year. It has been so painful having to do all of these things without our Mitch. We miss him more each day and are so lonely without him. We continue to "do and go," but our thoughts are with him always. Through a group of other bereaved parents, we learned to give Mitch a "symbol." We have chosen a star to be Mitch's symbol. He was a star in everything he did from art to athletics, and we feel so sad not to have his life to share in the years to come. Anyway, when you see stars, think of Mitch and say a prayer for him.*



Myra Goforth described the tree the family erected for Joshua's grave. Joshua was 6 years old and was killed by a dog, 6-4-93. His two brothers decorated a small tree

with big candy canes and a toy soldier. Joshua's symbols are Barney and a basketball.



Joanne, the 18-year-old daughter of Bob and Bonni Chapman, died in an automobile accident, 7-18-92. The Chapman's observed Joanne's birthday, December 28, by attending two candlelight services in memory of the children of Compassionate Friends and MADD. They had also planted a rose garden that reminded them of Joanne. The roses are salmon, red and yellow. Joanne's symbol is a dancer with wings for arms.



Jackie and Alice Fletcher's daughter, Lisa, died 5-3-93. The Fletcher's friends brought special ornaments and placed them on a small tree for Lisa. Their church had cards on a tree for the ones that had passed away in 1993. Lisa's symbol is a heart with an arrow through it.



Scott Hallam died of AIDS, 5-4-93. Carole, his mother, is very active in a support group for parents of AIDS patients. This poem was on the Christmas card Carole mailed last year.

"Merry" Christmas

I question if Christmas can ever be "merry," except for the heart of an innocent child

For when time has taught us the meaning of sorrow and sobered the spirits that once were so wild

When all the green graves that lie scattered behind us - like milestones are marking the length of the way, And echoes of voices that no more shall greet us

Have saddened the chimes of the bright Christmas Day.

We may not be "merry" the long years forbid it,

*The years that have brought us such manifold smarts,
But we may be happy, if only we carry the Spirit of Christmas deep down in our hearts.*

Hence I shall not wish you the old "Merry Christmas," since that is of shadowless childhood a part, but one that is holy and happy and peaceful, The spirit of Christmas deep down in your heart.

-Author Unknown

Adam, the 12-year-old son of Randy and Eula Floyd, died of Leukemia, 1-19-93. The family's tree last year was covered with pictures of Adam. The year before, Adam had helped select the tree, so it was difficult for the family to begin getting ready for Christmas. But they did. Eula wrote: *I get some comfort knowing that all these wonderful, beautiful kids are together watching over each other. I know they don't want us to be sad Adam was with us not only on Christmas or birthdays, but always. Our love for each other binds us together.*

Adam's symbol is a jukebox.



Last year Tommy and Gina Wright decorated the outside of their home with 1502 lights because Drew, their 4-year-old son, was 1502 days old when he died. The star on the tree they had in their yard was kept dark because their "star" was missing. Gina said that she was sure their star was shining brightly in Heaven. Drew's symbol is an angel with a light.



Last year, Elana Shearer, the sister of Ryan, who died of a brain tumor, 4-27-93, decorated the rooms of the children on the cancer wing of the UK. Medical Center. Ryan had been in the hospital the year before, and there had been no tree, and none of the rooms were decorated.

Elana did this in memory of Ryan. What a wonderful way to remember him. Ryan's symbol is a cowboy hat with an angel.



Terry and Kathy Jo Gutsell's 18-year-old son, Andrew, died from a congenital heart defect, 8-6-93. Last Christmas Kathy Jo's "present" to Andrew was to volunteer time with a Hospice patient who was dying of AIDS. Andrew's symbol is a UK basketball player with wings.



Monica, the 19-year-old daughter of Hershel and Judy Haste, died 4-3-93. The family decorated a small tree last year and put baskets with her Christmas toys, from years past, in them. The family has also restored a church in her memory. Monica's symbol is a dove.



Last year, Dale and Marlene Stokes placed a beautiful pine Christmas wreath, with a big red velvet bow and other appropriate "trimmings," on Darren's grave. Darren committed suicide, 3-31-86. She also sprinkled the '93 sprinkles over his grave. Darren's symbol is a deer.



Joe and Susan Walters sent a Christmas card to their many friends last year after the death of their 4-year-old son, Ralph, 7-29-93. The front of the card was a picture of Ralph, which had been taken at Bible School, and he was dressed as a shepherd. The card read:

May our little shepherd of God help you to focus this season on what is truly important in this life, and may your choices in the coming new year reflect that thinking.

Our wish is that our Creator may become ever more real to you, and that your acknowledgment of Him may become even more a Way of life.

Mark 12:29-31

Ralph's symbol is international children.



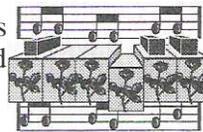
Danny and Kathy Akers 15-year-old son, Kevin, died from Acute Cardiac Disrhythmia, 12-14-93. The family wrote: *We are staying busy, but it seems to be a sad time of the year. Each day we must think of a special memory. We have many and they comfort us for a time.* The Akers plan to have a ball tree for Christmas, so it can be planted afterwards. The tree will be decorated with angels, "our angels."

Kevin wrote the following poem for Christmas one year:

Christmas Day

*Angels sing
and Shepherd's wait
Wise men rush
and can't be late
Jesus Christ is born
in a town so far away
underneath a star
in a manger full of hay.
His loving Mother, Mary
held him in her arms
far from the world's trouble
and the earth's unruly harm.*

Kevin's symbols are musical notes and roses.



Janet Mart's 18-year-old son, Marc was accidentally shot and died 3-22-93. Janet described Marc as *the Pied Piper of skateboarding. He could go out the front door and within minutes a trail of boys of all ages would wind behind him, imitating his athletic ability and skill earned through hard physical exertion.* Marc had lived 30 hours after the shooting, and not only did he give Janet and her son, Jason, so much during Marc's lifetime, he also gave the gift of life or sight to eight individuals. Janet explained Marc's organ donation: *Not only did he physically give his body parts after he no longer needed them, but he gave me a way to honor*

honor his life through my work with the Kentucky Organ Donor Affiliates.

I speak to medical professionals throughout the state about my experience with organ donation. In many situations, time is a luxury not afforded the professionals with the organ donor program and the burden falls on the attending medical personnel. There is a reticence on the part (if these doctors and nurses to speak of organ donation to an already grieving family-falsely assuming that this exchange would heighten the grief Statistics and empirical evidence have proven just the opposite. The percentage of donors is higher with infants than any other age group because these parents don't want any other families to suffer what they do.

Kentucky Organ Donor Affiliates (KaDA) in conjunction with Jewish Hospital in Louisville has sponsored a pilot project to install KIOSKS in Circuit Clerk's offices. These will be placed in locations that can be viewed as individuals wait to renew drivers' licenses and hopefully enable the \$1.00 donation and the signing of drivers' licenses. I was honored to present the donor family's side in the video, knowing all along that Marc was with me as I spoke.

Jason, age 17, is a senior this year and is described by Janet as the "strongest, warmest, most wise teenager ever." Jason wrote these acrostics:

Magnificently determined and typically poised

As he
Rides his skateboard through the
Cracks of humanity

Sometimes while
Unearthing
Memories of
Myself, they
Encourage thoughts of my brother's
Righteousness and self concept

Smart people doing
Pleasurable activities
Outside the
Realm of
Television

James Reeves, the 22-year-old son of Clyde and Nancy, was killed in an automobile accident, 7-12-94. James was a Patient Advocate at the Baptist Regional Medical Center. The family has given framed pictures of James to family members and friends so they will "see" him each day.

The family received a loving letter from Lisa Miller who had worked with James. Lisa began the letter by saying: *I can't even begin to tell you how wonderful it was to have not only worked with James, but just to have known him. He's one of the most special people to everyone's life he touched He expressed such Christian compassion in everything that he did. Everyone he came in contact with was blessed. . James cared about everyone, he always spoke very fondly of all his family and was very proud James will never be forgotten by anyone that was fortunate to have known him.*

The family has selected several symbols for James and gave the following explanations for each:

Smiley face- James always had a big smile for you. People tell me they remember that about him and him being so kind.

Heart- He had a big heart. He was so good and kind and was always there to help and to listen to your problems.

Cross- His relationship with Christ.

Praying Hands- His symbol for religion. He always liked praying hands.



Faye Lloyd, an aunt of Lisa Grisham who was killed in an explosion with three other youths on 7-2-93, has written several poems about Lisa. Lisa's parents, Darrell and Shirley, shared several of these poems, one of which is included in this newsletter.

CHRISTMAS WITHOUT LISA

In loving memory of Lisa Grisham

Fourteen wonderful Christmases with Lisa we had, she made each of us feel special and glad

Her spirit and gaiety gave us such pleasure, no one to her could even measure.

Her impish ways would make us laugh, her inner beauty no one knows the half She opened presents with such delight, like a boy flying his first kite.

This will be our first Christmas without her, but I know we'll all be thinking about her.

She's in Heaven now wishing Jesus a "Happy Birthday," while we're celebrating Christmas in our own special way.

We're all waiting to see you again, someday soon, we know not when.

We'll get through Christmas without you somehow, but we'll see you again, Lisa, this I vow.

Lisa's symbols are a rainbow and a horse.



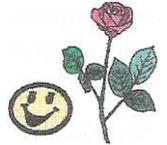
Joey, the 17-year-old son of Thomas and Anna Akers, died from complications of MD, 10-31-93. Anna described the last year. "It's been a sad, rough first year without Joey. He enjoyed life so much you had to enjoy it just for him." The family attended the MDA Telethon Labor Day weekend because Joey had been there for the past 5 years. The family felt that they had to do it for him. Their church had a song fest to observe the first anniversary of his death. Since a red candle is Joey's symbol, the family burned several at a memorial service.



Nancy Hannon's 19-year-old son, Michael, was killed in an automobile accident, 2-6-93. Nancy reminded me of the importance of staying in touch with fellow travelers. "I hope we can get together some day soon. When we do get together, it is like it gives us power and strength to cope with our grief for a few months, then this energy

runs low. We need a rejuvenation of love and compassion every so often in order to obtain our S.U.C.C.E.S.S." As we face these difficult holidays, I hope you will call on a fellow traveler if you need "power and strength to cope with your grief."

Michael's symbols are a smiley face and red rose.



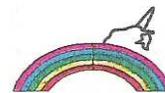
On the third anniversary of Linda's death, Walt and Mary Kane placed this memoriam in their local newspaper:

IN LOVING MEMORY OF LINDA L. SLOCUM

11-28-68 - 9-25-91

A Letter To My Loving Daughter, It's been three long years since you were suddenly taken away from me. Every night as I lay searching for sleep, you quietly walk through my mind. Then your Soft hands reach out and you whisper "Mom," as you brush away the tears from my eyes, and then those familiar feelings start walking all over my mind It's sad so sad to know "he" did that terrible thing to you, but my true love for you would not have done you wrong. I am just grateful for the good times we had, for without them I could not go on. I must go on and be strong even though millions of teardrops may fall. Because those familiar feelings keep walking all over my mind every day and night. I will never forget you my darling daughter. I always will love and miss you.

Love, Mom



Linda's symbols are a rainbow and a unicorn.

Ronnie, the 23-year-old son of Shorty and Wanda Willis, was killed in a motorcycle accident, 5-22-93. His symbol is a smiley face.



Wanda wrote that the she and Shorty had traveled to Natural Bridge and the red River Gorge area in October and had enjoyed the beautiful fall colors "blazing in the

sunshine." She said: *I always Think if Heaven when it is this lovely, and I think about all the wonderful, amazing places our children are now dwelling. The Bible says "our eyes have not seen nor our ears heard the beautiful place the Lord has prepared for us." I really believe that Ronnie and all the others are in that wonderful place now. I know the lord would not leave us without this hope.*

Wanda also reminisced about football season and how much Ronnie had enjoyed playing in high school and also watching UK. However, it is also a time of sadness for them because they are "reminded of the great fun we enjoyed and now how very much we are missing Ronnie because of all the wonderful memories we have of that time. But even though we have sadness, we also have joy and laughter for being blessed with memories of those days."

Marti Sue Kidd, the 19-year-old daughter of Barbara, died from Adult Respiratory Distress Syndrome, 3-1-94.

Barbara wrote:

"Susie" (as I often called her), was very good with young as well as older children. She loved the elderly, as well, and was very well loved by all her friends (of all ages). She learned to read and write at age three, and even in her tender years, had a very well adapted view of life. She was a very caring child, a loving young adult, and a very precarious adolescent. She had a large group of friends, many (if whom still visit with the family and share stories with us (if Marti Sue's life.

Marti Sue's symbol was selected because of her much loved Siamese Cat, who was put to sleep due to a heart condition just before Christmas of '92. She loved her cat dearly, and had raised "Prissy" from a kitten. Prissy was 11 years old and would only respond to Marti Sue

Marti's friends and classmates at UK are in the process of compiling a book about her life that (Upon completion) will be



placed in the library of the University of Kentucky.

Jeff, the 22-year-old son of Lonnie and Janice Stewart, was killed in a dune buggy accident, 6-9-94. Jeff was described by his parents as a very loving and caring person who loved the outdoors; fishing, hunting or just walking in the woods. He was known by everyone by his special little smile because it was naturally there. He worked as a deputy jailer and planned on becoming a police officer.

Jeff was in the D.A.R.E. Program. He thought it was a great program for young people, so we donate to the program in his memory and we plan on sending a child to D.A.R.E. camp this coming summer and work with the program as much as we can.

We picked the star symbol because we have a 3-year-old grandson and when we told him Uncle G (that is what he called Jeff) had gone to Heaven to live with Jesus, a night or two later he ran and got me by the hand and said, "come quick, Mammie, I see Uncle G," and it was a bright star. So every night he and I go look for Uncle G. If the stars are not out, we say that he is resting.



Ed and Carol Ruth Blackman's son, Samuel, was still born, 2-21-88. Carol described her pregnancy: *I'd taken every precaution during Samuel's pregnancy. I was excited as Samuel's due date neared--then passed. Finally after 17 1/2 years of marriage, I was in labor with our firstborn. After our great loss, the pain and loneliness I experienced from losing our precious Samuel, is what birthed Bereaved Parents Share a year and a half later. I was certain I wasn't the only person sitting isolated who had lost a precious child. I wanted to provide a free support group that arrived in the mailbox, that location or unusual work schedule wouldn't interfere with participation. After starting BPS, other stillbirth moms started contacting me. Soon a large proportion of the subscribers were moms who had lost babies. Those who had lost older children had difficulty identifying with those who had*

*lost babies. Mother's Day, 1991, I started printing **Bereaved Parents Share...II**, for those of us who have lost babies.*

*Several weeks before Samuel's birth, one morning while reading to him, praying with him and rocking him as was my early morning custom, the Lord whispered to my heart that Samuel would have a ministry at a very young age. I knew There would be a high price to pay for this ministry. I told no one, questioning if I had an overly active imagination. When the doctor announced he was dead, all I could think of was that promise which had been confirmed several times over by others who knew nothing of it, that Samuel would have a ministry at a very young age. Indeed. **Bereaved Parents Share... and Bereaved Parents Share II** are Samuel's ministry.*

If you are interested in contacting Carol, her address is:
Bereaved Parents Share..
Carol Blackman, Editor
27936 S. Schiewe Drive
Colton, OR 97017

Sunny, the 17-year-old daughter of Joe and Jo Ann Keating, was killed in an automobile accident, 7-23-94. Jo Ann shared: *When Sunny died, she took more if me than she left behind. She was not only my daughter, but also my best friend. Sunny was the perfect name for her because she brought so much light and laughter into The lives of all she touched. I truly know what Helen Keller meant when she said, "The best and most beautiful things (if this world can not be seen or even touched, but must be felt with the heart."*

One of Jo Ann's friends gave her a Christmas ornament in the shape of a sunshine. She then went and bought every ornament and will have a sunshine Christmas tree in memory of Sunny and will also put a sunshine on each gift she gives this Christmas. Sunny's symbols are an angel and a sunshine.

