

LAMENTATIONS

Issue 28

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

January, 1995



Have you made any *New Year's resolutions*? Have you resolved to be **further** along in your grief this time next year? As people have wished you a "Happy New Year," have you thought, "How can I? I have lost a part of me. How will I ever have a **happy** anything again?"

David Dick, writes the column *the View From Plum Lick* in the **Kentucky Living** magazine. He is a native Kentuckian, was a CBS news correspondent for 19 years, is currently a professor of journalism at the University of Kentucky, and is now a new friend who has challenged me to seek *peace at the center*. He has authored three books, one of which is *Peace At The Center*. Professor Dick defines *peace at the center* as a "Quaker expression meaning serenity at the core of human, and, finally, spiritual life."

Professor Dick tells about his little lamb, Bo, who died in 1994. Bo taught their family to, "Love now. Love well. There's no time like the present time. Try to look forward rather than backward, but remember, the most important thing of all is to take hold of each precious moment as if it were your last. It may be your last, but that doesn't mean it can't be your best."

Judge Sara Combs, the widow of Judge Belt Combs, was interviewed for this book, and she tells Professor Dick that *the grieving process*

essentially means that we are either able to let go of it or we perish. It teaches you to let go of everything in life that you can't control.

You know everything is lent to us for awhile, nothing is given, and when its time to be reclaimed, if we don't let go of it we either look greedy and grubby and stupid, because we can't hold it back, or we destroy ourselves in the process, And if you do let go, There comes a kind of grace and a kind of peace and an ability to accept what comes next. If we don't let go of that 'which we've lost, then we're never open to accept whatever comes along again.

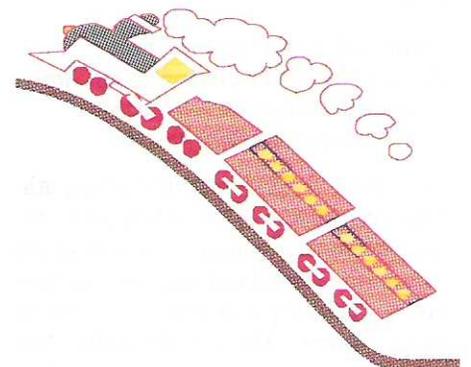
Another profound quote from Sara: *... but not until one undergoes the crucible, perhaps, puts all those values to the test in the crucible of life experience--a great love, a great passion, and, I think a great sorrow. I think one has to suffer before all These values can be tested. . . Then one starts to deal differently with the world, and that is your **peace at the center**.*

I hope you and I will learn what Bo has taught Professor Dick's family. I pray that we will be more like Bo in 1995!

January is such a quiet, cold month. We have survived the holidays, and now we wonder how we will get through the long winter. We, in the northern hemisphere, know it is usually a month with cold temperatures and a time when the animals are hibernating, the birds have traveled south for the winter, and plants are "resting" in anticipation of spring. However, we should also remember that the southern hemisphere is enjoying a January.

is usually the warmest month of the year and plants are growing, the animals are active, and the birds are singing. I guess it is true--that law of Physics, which states, For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. The loss of our loved one has taken our grief all the way to the end of heartbreak and sorrow--could that mean as the scripture in Psalm 30:5 promises us: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning"? Perhaps our future will hold great joy, since we have suffered great loss. May we look for that joy.

Take the challenge of the **Little Engine that Could**. Our grief is so much like the Story of the little engine. It is certainly a climb out of that abyss of grief. It is an uphill climb, and so many times we say we cannot make it, and many times we don't want to make it. However, when you are at that pit of despair, remind yourself of that **Little Engine** and accept that as your motto. Move yourself from **I Can't** to **I think I can** then to that S.U.C.C.E.S.S.ful statement -- **I know I can! (And I will)**



Grief Grafts

Lois Kelly, a new-found soul sister, is a wonderful writer and story teller. She also happens to be a graduate of Cumberland College. When I told her about Young Jim, and his life and death, she said it reminded her of the poem, *To an Athlete Dying Young*. She sent me a copy and I wanted to share it with you. Lois has several degrees in English, and thank goodness she explained each stanza! I have included the explanations under each stanza.

To an Athlete Dying Young

*The time they won your town the race
We chaired you through the market
place;
Man and boy stood cheering by,
And home we brought you shoulder
high.*

("Chair"- put in a straight chair and carry the winner through the market place; the chair with the athlete was carried with the young athlete by strong men. The young athlete wore the garland.)

*Today, the road all runners come,
Shoulder-high we bring you home,
And set you at your threshold down,
Townsmen of a stiller town.*

("The road all runners come" is death. Shoulder-high picks up the theme in Stanza 1 of being carried "shoulder high." The men carry him to the grave yard- "we bring you home" and the young athlete will be with others whom the poet calls "Townsmen of a stiller town.")

*Smart lad, to slip betimes away
From fields where glory does not stay
And early though the laurel grows
It withers quicker than the rose.*

(The poet congratulates the young athlete on slipping away while he is remembered as a winner. He says of the laurel [the laurel bush was used to fashion a "crown"] that the winner wore, soon withers. He tells the athlete that he can win the race early, but it does

not remain in the minds and hearts of others- it withers. Someone else takes the prize and his record is broken.)

*Eyes the shady night has shut
Cannot see the record cut;
And silence sounds no worse than
cheers*

After earth has stopped the ears.

(Another advantage of dying young is that the athlete will not know that his record has been broken. He is beyond disappointment "and failure." Although "shady night," a metaphor for death, has shut his eyes, he will not even hear the cheers that others have won.)

*Now you will not swell the rout
Of lads that wore their honours out
Runners whom renown outran And
the name died before the man.*

(Furthermore, you will not become just another lad who was left behind and who nobody remembers, "the name died before the man.")

*So set before its echoes fade,
The fleet foot on the sill of shade, And
hold to the low lintel up
The still-defended challenge cup.*

(You will always be a winner. The picture is the grave, and from the grave the athlete keeps his record and his name.)

*And round that early-laurelled head
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead
And find unwithered on its curls
The garland briefer than a girl's.*

(The irony is that you will be forever remembered as the young athlete who was a winner! This memorial contrasts those with the "strengthless dead" including those who outlived their accomplishments.)-A.E. Housman

I dedicate this to all our "Young Athletes."

Ralphie, the 19-year-old son of Ralph and Dana Coomer, was killed in an automobile accident, 6-11-94. Dana shared that Ralphie's friends still call the family, and they miss him so much. Ralph's symbols are praying hands and an Eagle.



Dana sent the following poem others- was written by Ralphie's girl friend, Lyndsey

"Ralphie"

He was perfect in every way. I was in love with him, what can I say.

He charmed me with that cute crooked smile and those big eyes of blue. I felt like the luckiest girl in the world every time he said "I Love You." How could I have known he'd ever say good-bye.

I've asked and I've asked, "Why God, why? How could you take someone as wonderful as he? Why didn't you leave him and just take me? He was so important to everyone here. No one understands, it's so unclear."

Now I can only look up at the stars and pray. He knows how I feel and he hears what I say. I cry and I cry cause I wish he was here. And then I remember he is very near. He's beyond the clouds, farther than we can see. Sometimes I wonder if he even thinks of me. I wonder if he remembers all the good times we had We stuck together through the good and the bad The future looked good, we were happy and so bright.

I never imagined such a dreadful night. Our future is gone, but the love is still there. The memories are forever and I'll always care. What we had, I'll always hold dear. You'll hear all my prayers and see every tear. The bond we built will never fade away. I think of you and I together everyday.

Now we are apart, but not for long, our bond was true and very strong. I know you'll be with me every step of the way. You'll see me grow up and maybe even turn gray.

I know my life will be filled with a lot of good and bad Nothing could make me forget what a special relationship we had

I'll be missing you, loving you, and needing you every day. We'll be together again when in the ground my body lay. For my soul will be in Heaven and with you I'll be. We'll be together, forever, as one, happily.

John and Gail Toye's 24-year-old daughter, Kimmy, was killed when a tree fell on her at camp. Gall

wrote: *We are still struggling with our loss. I do take comfort in having no regrets except for her untimely death. She (Kimmy) was a bright spot in the lives of everyone who got to know her. The poem, "Heaven's Very Special Child", says it all. I'm sure you have read it. Kimberly had difficulty at birth and was diagnosed early in life as having mild Cerebral Palsy and mental retardation. So at birth, we started dealing with grief but after struggling to rear her, she became very special, indeed, to us. Though she could not verbalize well, her affect was delightful. She was very expressive in her comments, and body language. Though she was limited, she seemed to have the innate timing of a comedian, and delighted everyone with her humorous, yet innocent antics. As a "child" of three, she continued to take delight in the simplest pleasures. Everyone has a "Kimmy story."*

My work has been my salvation. (Gail is a school principal) it is helping me deal with my grief greatly, (though at times it's a huge source of frustration!). I hope to be able to give our students experiences they may not otherwise receive in this, I'll be able to bring excitement to other children and share some of Kimberly's love of life.

Heaven's Very Special Child

*A meeting was held quite far from earth
"It's time again for another birth,"
Said the Angels to the Lord above,
"This ,special child will need much
love. "*

*Her progress may seem very slow,
Accomplishments she may not show
And she'll require extra care
From the folks she meets way down
there.*

*She may not run or laugh or play
Her thoughts may seem quite far away
in many ways, she won't adapt,
And she'll be known as handicapped.
So let's be careful where she's sent
We want her life to be content
Please, Lord, find the parents who
Will do a special job for YOU.*

*They will not realize right away
The leading role they're asked to play*

*But with this child sent from above
Comes stronger faith and richer love.
And soon they'll know the privilege
given*

*In caring for this gift from Heaven.
Their precious charge, so meek and
mild*

*Is Heaven's Very special
child.*

-Author Unknown



Kimmy's symbol is a
rosebud.

Scott, the 18-year-old son of Curtis and Pat Livingston, was killed in an automobile accident, 10-14-93. Pat shared many of the same feelings we have: *"Looking back, Lamentations was the only thing I could read after Scott's death. I think maybe it gave me a sense of not being alone, that others were experiencing and have experienced the same heartbreaking pain and grief I was going through.*

People say time will help, and in a way I guess it has. I will tell you, though, that if I have an idle moment during the day, my thoughts are of my son. He is my first and last thought of every day.

I have stopped crying everyday, but the tears still come easily. . . I miss him so desperately. "

Pat sent this poem which was written by one of Scott's friend's sister.

If I Had Only Known

*If I had only known it was the last we
would ever talk,*

*I would have memorized everything you
said.*

*If I had only known it was the last time
I would ever see you,*

I would have made you stay longer.

*If I had only known it was the last time
you would make me laugh,*

*I would have remembered what you
said.*

*If I had only known it was the last time
you would smile at me,*

I would have made it last forever.

*If I had only known what was going to
happen to you,*

*I would have never let you leave.
If I had only known you were never
coming back,
I would have told you what you meant
to me.*

If I had only known.

-Melissa M. Damron

Scott's symbol is a
baseball



Quentin Meade, the 13-year-old son of Hubert and Pam, died from Synovial cell carcinoma, 8-8-93. Pam is able to express her grief through poetry. I have included two of her more recent poems. Quentin's symbols are Legos and praying hands.



Life's Puzzle?

*I try to live each day
As God I would have me to
Knowing in my heart
This is what I must do.*

*There is so very much
I don't understand
But I know I will.
If I stand in the better land.*

*I pray for knowledge
For God's love to fill my heart
To have the understanding
When this We I do depart.*

*I try to find a way everyday
To study God's word
I understand He created all
Even down to the little bird.*

*I know He's above all
Having the mighty hand
It's like fitting a piece to
The puzzle of His divine plan.*

*Thru everyday living
So much to figure out
In this life of everyday sorrow
Will we truly understand
What it's all about?*

*What is the true meaning of life!
Will we really ever know
That we all have a purpose!
In my heart I believe this is so.*

*Will we ever know
What we are to see!*

*I pray to be this person
That God would have me be.*

*I pray for courage and strength
To help me thru this life
Tho at times it's filled
With so much strife.*

*God didn't promise life would be easy
As you know
When we read of Jesus
We know this is so.*

*Trying to fit all
The puzzle of life together
With God's help
I'll ride out the stormy weather.*

*So living at best
That heavenly home I'm trying to win
There's one more piece to the puzzle
Will I be the last fill-in?*

Seeking That Home

*Living here below in this world
Not much to look forward to
Seeking that home Jesus promised
Is what I daily do.*

*Fighting the devil on this earth
Is something I also do
What trials and tribulations
The sorrow I must go thru.*

*About eight months ago
Our oldest son was called away
God answers my prayer
For strength I pray for each day.*

*I know Quentin is in Heaven
Realizing how much better he is
Tho at times I'm envious of
That home that is now his.*

*I know he's no longer in pain
This much do I know
But no longer seeing or holding him
Oh! How I miss him so.*

*Quentin was so strong
His love for God being so great
If God had not called him when He did
This love may have turned to hate.*

*I can only imagine
The peace and comfort of his new home
Wanting this also when my life is thru
Knowing from Jesus I must never roam.*

*Having so much to look forward to
When earthly life is thru
Trusting always in Jesus' love'
Is what I'll always do.*

Helmut and Goodie Graetz's 24-year-old son, Andy, died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound, 12-12-93. Andy's symbol is a Caduceus. Goodie shared: "We celebrated Andy's birthday together with our family. All of us were up-beat and thankful that he once was ours." The family is progressing through their grief and is "actually looking forward to doing things again." I believe this progression is evident in the poem, *Last Night*, which Goodie has added to since it was printed in September, 1994's newsletter: Goodie has added the last verse, and doesn't it show that she is gaining S.U.C.C.E.S.S.? We are all seeking grace and peace.



Last Night

*Last night I heard the song of the
 nightingale
A sound so haunting and fair,
so lovely, yet sad, such a bittersweet
 wail
't was more than I could bear.*

*He sang of old times long since past,
Of yearning, love and farewell
Of happiness that could not last,
Of joy that would not dwell.*

*And as I listened to his tunes
I marveled at the bird:
How could he know of by-gone moons,
Of things that no one heard?*

*Oh, done and gone are youth's sweet
 dreams
Forever gone and done;
And though I know God has his
 schemes
My tears won't stop to run.*

*Last night I heard the song of the
 nightingale
A sound so lovely and true,
So sweet, yet blue, such a mournful
 wail
It tore my heart in two.*

*He sang of old times long ago,
Of love and pain and good-bye,
Of ecstasy in moon's pale glow,
Our destiny to die.*

*He sang of life's dark mystery
And I trembled in my soul,
How could he know the history
Of things that once were whole?*

*Oh, dreams of youth, they only teased
Why did they have to lie?
And even though the song long ceased I
cannot stop to cry.*

*Oh, nightingale oh, nightingale
When will my poor heart mend?
When new spring is over hill 'n' dale
May grace and peace descend*

Ray and Sue Hutcheson's 20-year-old daughter, Leslie, was killed in an automobile accident, 2-21-93. Sue was thumbing through the book, *A Rainblow at Midnight*, by E. Y. Hurt, and she found a picture of Leslie as a young child. The following poem was on the page where she found Leslie's picture.

A MISSING BLOSSOM

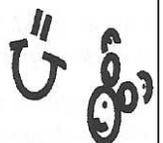
*A little blossom grew by the way
In this cruel and wicked world,
Like other flowers here could not stay
Leaving us the memory of a little girl.*

*She's gone to dwell beyond the moon of
 gold
With angels and in Heaven to stay,
Where flowers never fade and hearts
grow cold
Leaving her petals to return to clay.*

*Where no sorrows ever darken he brow
Or fate taking the lives of the gay,
Up there where we shall know then as
 now
No nights or clouds to dim the day.
Where no tempest winds howl or blow
No aching hearts to die in pain, Things
we don't understand up there
 we'll know
All will be in sunshine instead of rain.*

*So this blossom is missing by the way
Leaving this cruel world behind
She is now a flower in the Master's
bouquet .
And a mural on the dim
walls of time.*

Leslie's symbols are a smile and a bear.





Craig and Julia Byrd's 2-year-old daughter, Kendra Danae, died from smoke inhalation, 5-7-94. Kendra's symbols are an angel and a rosebud.

Joe and Elaine Stillwell began a **Compassionate Friends** chapter in Rockville Centre, New York, when two of their children, Denis and Peggy O'Connor died from an automobile accident in 1988. Their daughter, Annie, was married in October. Their group of compassionate friends attended the wedding, and as Joe and Elaine came up the aisle after the ceremony, they gave them a standing ovation. A fellow compassionate friend, Moe Beres, wrote the following poem:

A Wedding Tale

*It was summer this October morning
The church was vast and magnificent.
Evelyn and Marsha hugged each other
and cried
Their tears were tears of joy for Annie,
Elaine and Joe.*

*Their tears were tears of pain for they
would never see Janine and Dawn
walk down the aisle as Annie did
We were there. "The Friends"
Not so much because Elaine needed us
More because we had to be there as
she was there for us
She was our light through the early
darkness*

*We have shared so much over the years
It was so right to share this as well.*

*The ceremony was beautiful
Because Annie glowed as she walked
down the aisle*

*Because Reverend Clark's words were
real*

*Because Peggy and Denis were there
Because Ernie Sement's crystal, me-
lodious voice caressed the majestic
stone walls and brilliant stained glass
Because we were there confronting our
pain and basking in the joy-together.*

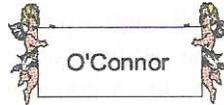
*We exited into the halo of sunshine
We smiled genuine smiles as we took
pictures-together*

*We threw our environmentally safe
"rice" and watched Annie and John
pull away in the classic white "Rolls"
I was so happy
Happy for John and Annie, Mr. and
Mrs. Albanese
Happy for Joe with his quiet, unassum-
ing strength and support that makes
him so ,special
Happy for us being part of it
But most of all--so happy for Elaine
Who through all the years of emotional
and physical pain
Was still able to reach out her hand to
us
She now had a hand reaching out to
her
One that was loving, caressing and
eternal.*

*As we walked away from this magical
scene on this magical day
I could hear Elaine (as she so often
did)
Thank Peggy and Denis for the weather
and the day.*

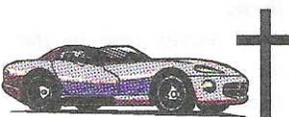
-Moe

Denis and
Peggy's symbol
is an angel.



Lendel and Karen Slone's son, Wade, was killed in an automobile accident, 5-16-94, two days after his 18th birthday. Karen said that people who had talked with Wade on the day he died said that it was like he was saying good-bye for the last time. He was a loving, caring, thoughtful, helping person and he is missed terribly by his family. The family has chosen an '83 Pontiac Firebird and a cross as Wade's symbols. He was driving the Firebird when he was killed, and he

always wore
a cross a-
round his
neck.



Bessie, the 14-year-old daughter of Pat Root, was a passenger in an automobile when she was killed. Bessie and Pat did everything together. Bessie was very popular and Pat describes her as "warm,

witty, so comical and had a beautiful smile and teeth." Bessie was planning to be a model. Pat feels that God has been evident to her through all that has happened. Two days after Bessie's death, Pat found the following poem which was written by Bessie:

*When I look up at the sky,
I think of what Heaven
will be like when I die.*

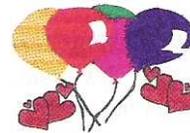
*I imagine the golden
Streets I will walk upon
and the big pearly gate
I will walk through. . .*

*But most of all, the clouds
I will ride on in the
pretty blue.*

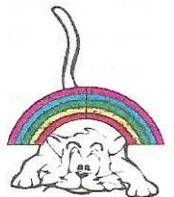
*I do not dread dying
because there's nothing
to be scared of;*

*It's something to look
forward to.*

Bessie's symbols are hearts because she loved and collected them, and balloons because she had to have balloons sent to school for every occasion.



Chaps and Lu Ann Burnett celebrated the birthday of Anna Beth this year with family and friends who gathered to decorate the evergreen tree the family planted last year on Anna Beth's birthday. The family decorated the tree for the earthly, winged friends with popcorn, birdseed balls and millet sprigs. It will be a special tradition for the family from now on. Anna Beth died 5-9-93. Her symbol is a rainbow cat.



Jeremy, the 19-year-old son of Paula Atkins, died after he accidentally fell from a railroad bridge. Paula described Jeremy: *Jeremy was a sophomore at Ball State University*

and was majoring in English and Drama after receiving a drama scholarship. Jeremy also loved to dance, lift weights, place soccer, chess, board games with family and friends, eat, laugh, watch old movies, climb, write poetry, listen to Garrison Keillor, Steve Martin and Monty Python tapes, rock music from the 60's and 70's, camping, the outdoors, exploring the mind, etc. As a matter of fact, Jeremy loved everything about life with the exception of man-made problems. He had absolutely no patience when it came to people who exhibited cruelty or inconsideration to others.

I know I've made him sound like a saint. I'm sure that's not unusual for mothers. The truth is--Jeremy was the nicest, most exciting person I have ever known in my life--regardless of the fact that I'm his mom. Jeremy had scores of friends' and why not? He was everything we look for in a friend--the greatest of listeners, always considerate, so funny, and the most demonstrative person I've ever met. He hugged you and kissed you and told me, his brother and sister he loved us at least once a day when he was home.

I have no trouble understanding Jeremy's being on that bridge. It's something I would have done myself, although the climbing is no longer something I would do. He held no fear of physical limits and never considered the consequences of those types of actions. **Bad things DO happen to good people** and this is just one more example of this.

These are a few of Jeremy's quotes:

- * It's important to be well rounded, especially for bald people.
- * A day without sunshine is like night.
- * Don't spend your life finding what you want. Spend it on finding who you are.
- * I have become such a romantic that I live in a completely different world than anyone else. I love it here.
- * People that live in glass houses should own a lot of Windex.
- * Memories of horror are the assurances of peace.
- * An insightful imagination can conquer a troubled life by creating a new one.

* There is no ANSWER, but there are ANSWERS.

Sally Arias' son, Ray (Rito), died from Leukemia, 2-26-93. Sally has had a busy year. She wrote: My 8-year-old German Shepherd, Duke, has just completed his 3rd leg for his AKC companion dog title. I had promised Ray that I would get Duke's CD and I did. The promises still matter and must be kept. Now we have started tracking and then will head to search and rescue training. Within 3 weeks, Duke will also qualify for a therapy dog which will give me great joy and anguish--we will visit the young and old in the hospitals and nursing homes--they will be able to pet Duke and see his tricks.

Sally's shepherd pup has just turned 1 and Sally will be breeding her in another year so **RITO's KENNELS** will then become a reality.

Sally is also operating **Sally's Kitchen, Inc.** which sells hot pepper jelly and a pica pasta salad, but will be adding other items when she builds a commercial kitchen in her new home. Sally also does catering and food promotions.

A friend of Sally's sent her the following poem:

We Remember Them

At the rising of the sun and at its going down

We remember them.

At the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter

We remember them.

At the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring

We remember them.

At the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer

We remember them.

At the rustling of leaves and in the beauty of autumn

We remember them.

At the beginning of the year and when it ends

We remember them.

As long as we live, they too will live; For they are now a part of us.

We remember them.

(Gates of Prayer. Reformed Judaism Prayer Book)

Ray's symbols are a tennis racket and a smiling German Shepherd.

Geraldine Fitzgerald lost her 28-year-old daughter, Linda, to Marfans Syndrome, 7-24-91. Geraldine is now a lay minister in Bereavement for the Catholic Church. Geraldine sent me the following poem written by a fellow traveler:

*The New Year comes
When all the world is ready
For changes, resolutions--
Great beginnings.*

*For us, to whom
That stroke of midnight means
A missing child remembered,
For us, The New Year comes
More like another darkness.*

*But let us not forget
That this may be the year
When love and hope and courage
Find each other somewhere
In the darkness.*

*To lift their voice and speak-
Let there be light!*

-Sascha Wagner

Linda's symbol is an angel.



In Meg Woodson's book, **Making It Through The Toughest Days of Grief**, she suggests that we have a candle lighting ceremony on New Year's eve a burn a **blue** candle for past joys, a **red** candle for present courage, and a **yellow** candle for hope for the future. Perhaps we can add our **green** candle we burned at Christmas which represents our growing and working through our grief.

I have been given a **Chocolate Lovers** calendar for 1995. I have finally found my true calling . . . Now if I can just find someone who's looking for a professional chocolate taster!

