

LAMENTATIONS

Issue 31

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

APRIL 1995

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It is another April Fool's Day!! And on April 1, I challenge you to see how far you have progressed in your grief. Rather than it being a day of "fooling" ourselves, let it be a day that we look reality square in the face and see how S.U.C.C.E.S.S. fully we are progressing. **The Compassionate Friends** have the following guidelines entitled *You Know You're Making Progress When:*

- * You can remember your child with a smile.
- * You realize the painful comments others made are made in ignorance.
- * You can reach out to help someone else.
- * You stop dreading holidays.
- * You can sit through a church service without crying.
- * You can concentrate on something besides your child.
- * You can find something to thank God for.
- * You can be alone in your house without it bothering you.
- * You can talk about what happened to your child without falling apart.
- * You no longer feel you have to go to the cemetery every day or every week. You can tolerate the sound of a baby crying.
- * You don't have to turn off the radio when his or her favorite music comes on.
- * You can find something to laugh about.
- * You can drive by the hospital or that intersection without screaming.
- * You no longer feel exhausted all the time.

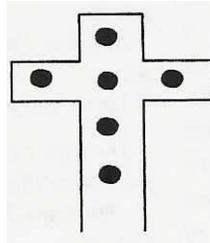
April 2 is the beginning of **Daylight Saving Time**. This is a day in which clocks are set one hour ahead of standard time for a certain designated period. As a result, darkness comes one hour later than on standard time. I feel that this is an extra gift to us. We not only have one hour less to grieve, but we have the added blessing of one more hour of daylight. For this we should be thankful.

Our church has had a 6-week study on grief, and we plan to have a service on Saturday before Easter to remember those we have lost to death. We think it is most fitting since that was also the day that Christ was in the tomb. I often think of Mary and how she felt during that time. She, like us, lost her son to death. What agony did she experience and what comfort did she receive?



If your church is planning a service, I encourage you to attend. If your church has not planned such a recognition service, you may want to suggest one. Let it be a celebration of their lives and the promise that we will be with them again.

You may also want to have a Lenten Cross or wreath as you did at Christmas. We are using one in our memorial service that is in the shape of a cross with six candles that will represent our different stages of grief.



Denial- Anger - Depression - Acceptance Hope - Reinvestment in Life.

May I suggest the colors:

Denial- (cowardly) Anger-red

Depression - brown or black

Acceptance - blue

Hope - a rainbow of colors

Reinvestment - green (for growth)

April 26 is **Secretaries' Day**. A **secretary** is a person who writes letters and keeps records for a person, company, etc. I want to challenge each of you to become a secretary of your grief. As you know, I have kept journals since Young Jim's death, and I can look through the 18 I have already written and see how far I have come in my journey through grief. It has also become an anthology of the many wonderful memories I have of Young Jim. So many things I see and do each day remind me of something that was said or done during Young Jim's life, and I try to write them down. I hope you will also write down those memories so there will be a record for you and your family. And, it will also help you see how you are progressing through your grief. You don't need to write each day, just whenever you think of something you would like for someone else to remember, or something you don't want to forget.



Grief Grafts



April is the time of year we begin to do our spring cleaning.

Perhaps this is a good time to do something with the room of your loved one. In Ronald J. Knapp's book, *Beyond Endurance- When A Child Dies*, he talks about our child's room as "The Empty Room." Mr. Knapp explained that doing something with the room is often one of the most difficult things parents have to do. For some parents, the room may even become a "sacred" place and everything is to remain as it was when their loved one was alive. "The empty room is something from which one cannot escape. It is a part of the home but, at death, it becomes apart from it. Learning to experience the pain associated with it in a realistic manner is essential in order to complete one's grief work."

Realizing that the memories will be painful, regardless of what one does with the empty room, helps in arriving at a realistic response to the order of living with the empty room.

It is important to understand that there is no hurry to "do something" with the room. It may be too painful to deal with it immediately, but time itself will make facing it easier. Mr. Knapp suggests: *Avoiding it may simply extend the grieving process far beyond reasonable limits. Therefore, painful as this may be in the beginning, I believe that parents should make every effort not to avoid the room or to cut it out of their lives. Nor should they turn it into a living memorial. Instead, they should make all attempts to use the room as a place to grieve and cry a place to experience and express the pain and anguish of*

loss. Then you may be able to redecorate or remodel the room and turn it into something else, such as a den, reading room, or TV room. In this way the room will be kept as an intimate part of the family home.

After Young Jim's death, we went through his belongs and "treasures" and saved several things which meant so much to us, and then gave his clothing, and "stuff" to his friends. These items have meant so much to them and it is such a comfort to see them wearing his shirts, caps, etc. We have also converted his room into a TV room for us where we have our favorite pictures and some of his trophies, etc. I feel especially close to him in this room and it is where I write letters, etc. What have you done? Hope you will share your ideas.

A very dear friend of ours, Sam McGill, gave the following poem that was written by his daughter. Two young boys in her community were killed in a train accident and she was inspired to write this poem:

A Message To Mom

Looking down on you, there is something I see

A place that I so long to be

At your side Mom, with places to go

But for some reason, God said "It isn't so."

But Mom, it isn't so bad up here

I have no worries and nothing to fear

No homework and lots of time to play

The nights are short with very long days.

I miss you terribly and I'm sorry I had to die

And during the days I sometimes hear you cry

But now I'm your guardian angel you see

That's the plan God has for me.

He says I can take better care of you from here than there

He says He knows He was a little unfair

So Mom, It's OK. I know that life goes on.

So don't mourn or be sad for very long

Memories of me tucked away inside Emotions you sometimes won't be able to hide.

I'll love you, you know, for as long as you're there

The pain I know, will be hard to bear So when it comes, just reach down deep

For one of those memories I asked you to keep.

And don't be afraid to smile as you hear my name

Because you know I'm looking at you and doing the same.

-Karen McGill Hurst

In memory of Casey Russell and Adam Warnick (6-20-94)

Greg, the 40-year-old son of Dave and Jean Luckhaupt, died 2-6-94. Jean shared: *Greg was organist for the choir where he attended elementary school. He taught music at the high school he had attended, but a few years earlier. He helped to form and promote the first high school band at his alma mater after graduating with dual degrees from Ohio State University. He later obtained his masters degree from Northwestern University in Evanston.*

Greg obtained a part time faculty position as a music teacher at Loyola University in Chicago. He taught all levels of students, conducted choral and orchestral groups, conducted a Broadway show on tour and was music director of all of Gilbert and Sullivan', works. As a fellow Loyola University faculty priest told us, 'Greg did all that he ever wanted to do during his life time in the profession of music. Greg's name will live on as long as Loyola University retains their alma mater "Hail Loyola'."

Greg wrote the music to "Hail Loyola." His symbols are musical notes.



George Haskett, a friend of Gary and Chris Barker, wrote the following poem. The Barker's son, Jason, was killed on his bicycle, 8-31-92. Jason's birthday is 3-8-77.

When I'm Gone

When you turn your thoughts toward me and remember who I was.

If you're talking to your mom or just visiting with your cuz-

Just sitting around the table – eating the Christmas ham.

Are you recalling who I was, or being reminded of who I am? When you think of a thought of some thing that maybe I might have said,

Remember, I'm not in the past - I've just gone on ahead instead

Recalling where I used to sit, as you ask Mom to pass the jam,

Don't weep for me when you know I'm gone- Just remember where I am

And be sure to know that someday, you'll be walking with me too,

Then those you've left behind will smile, as they remember you

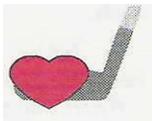
But it's not who you were they'll see, as they pray toward a favorite star,

They're just recalling some good times they've had-as they remember where you are.

Jason's symbol is a butterfly.



Clark, the 16-year-old son of Doug and Kathy Elliott, was killed in an automobile, 6-20-93. Clark's symbols are golf clubs and a big heart. Kathy sent this poem and signed her letter, "With love from a 'wounded traveler.'"



The Bells Tell Grief and Sorrow

Within my heart tolls bells of the grief and sorrow as I go about picking up the piece of my life

For I must continue with life and not allow myself to stay beside the grave of my son too long.

There cannot be anything gained at the grave instead, I must allow lord to take my hand and help me look above my pain

There I see a word filled with hurting people whom I can give comfort and support as they make their painful journey

I can learn from my tragedy and in turn help my fellow wounded travelers and this road of life.

It is as I give a helping hand and share the knowledge learned from my own sorrow that a harvest of blessings and treasure will become a part of my vault of spirited wealth.

--Elizabeth Freeze

Alice Jean, 38, died from accidental suffocation, 2-5-94. Alice Jean was the daughter of Jack and Stella Lewis, the wife of Don Loudon, and the mother of Lee and Melinda. Stella shared: *Alice Jean was an alcoholic and was trying to get her life straightened out. She had joined AA and, a year before she died; she had been in a treatment center for a week. She had been to a meeting the night before she died. She tried so hard to quit drinking, but I guess she just couldn't. She was a beautician and had a good business. She had her beauty shop in her home. I was on my way to get my hair fixed the morning she died. She had just fixed a lady's hair in my church before I was to go. But she had left the house before I got there to get her a bottle of Vodka, came home and was hiding it in the cold air duct in the floor of her house. It was a large duct and she slipped and fell accidentally, was lodged in the duct and suffocated.*

Stella decided to retire early rather than waiting until she was 65 because she felt if her children and grandchildren needed her she would be able to help. *"I am, thank the Lord, in good health, and except for the mental strain and sadness of losing Alice Jean, I am going to make it, and try to be there for my grandchildren when I am needed."* Stella plans to begin writing letters to other mothers who have lost

children. She has a new computer and plans to use it to correspond with others. She is so thankful that her son-in-law is so willing to talk about Alice Jean. Alice Jean's symbol is a rose.

Cheryl Girouard lost her three children, Caitlin (5), Sarah (3), and Danny (1) in a terrible automobile accident, 6-6-88. Cheryl has been an inspiration to me, as she has to all who know her. Cheryl was inspired to write the following poem, saying this is *a tribute to my earthly best friend; - Caitlin, Sarah and Danny. I love you. See you in Paradise.*



Here we stand,
Face to face;
Time and circumstance
Can't erase



The sorrow that's grown inside my heart
Heaven's gate Keeps us apart.

Love, Mom

Caitlin's symbol is a bunny, Sarah's is a blue bird, and Danny's is Big Bird.

John and Billie Jo Welch's only child, Marsha (19), died of a gunshot wound, 11-5-92. The symbols they have chosen for Marsha were used on her casket and headstone. They are doves flying upward, with an angel standing nearby. Billie Jo described Marsha: *We feel very blessed to have had these rays of beaming sunshine for nineteen years.*

