

LAMENTATIONS

Issue 34

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

July 1995



July 4th is a day we, as a nation, celebrate our independence. We wave flags, have picnics and wear red, white and blue. When we see a flag waving, it stirs joy, courage, sacrifice and pride. Many people have died to protect our nation so we may all have the privilege and freedom of displaying our flag and enjoying all the freedoms our great country gives each of us.

When we entertain in our home, a flag (not the U.S. flag) is flown on our porch to show the guests and others who may see it that it is a special day with special people.

In America, we fly a flag to show our patriotism and love for our country. A flag can also be used as a symbol or a signaling device. How many times have we felt like waving a flag telling others that we need help or wanted to wave a white flag telling anyone who would listen that we surrender? In the case of our grief, we need the *freedom* to *surrender* to the work and sacrifice it will take to go through it, rather than surrendering and not facing that "enemy" of grief.

Alan D. Wolfelt., in his book **Understanding Grief; Helping Yourself Heal**, listed twelve freedoms of healing in grief that we can each adopt. They are:

1- The freedom to realize our grief is unique

2- The freedom to talk about our grief
3- The freedom to expect to feel a multitude of emotions

4- The freedom to allow for numbness
5- The freedom to be tolerant of our physical and emotional limits

6- The freedom to experience grief attacks or memory embraces

7- The freedom to develop a support system

8- The freedom to make use of ritual

9- The freedom to embrace our spirituality

10- The freedom to allow a search for meaning

11- The freedom to treasure our memories

12- The freedom to move toward our grief and heal



The "**Stars and Stripes**" stand for our country, our people, our government, and the ideals of the United States. The colors of the flag are **red**, **white** and **blue**. These colors represent: **Red**--for hardiness and courage; **white** for purity and innocence, and **blue**--for vigilance, perseverance, and justice.

The **star** represents unity and has 5 points. One of the definitions of a star is a *star-shaped pattern of lines radiating outward from the nucleus of an atom that is exploded by high-energy particles*. I encourage you to become the *nucleus* of your grief and let these star sprinkles energize you to take charge of these five needs that we all have to face. When we take charge of our own needs, we progress at our own pace and own ability.

★ The need to take care of ourselves emotionally, physically and spiritually, while tolerating the pain that comes with our grief work.

★ The need to transform the relationship we had with our loved one from one of presence to one of memory. An example would be a living legacy such as a scholarship, a published poem, a memory book of photos, etc.

★ The need to form a new identity without our loved one. This is so difficult, but we now know that we can survive anything because we have experienced the worst. I think we will develop into more caring, kinder and more sensitive persons.

★ The need to have our family, friends and/or a support group to provide a listening ear that will understand and support our grief and will provide this support in the months and years to come.

★ The need to accept when we may need professional help to aid us in working through the many complications of grief. This is not a sign of weakness or that we are going "crazy," but a characteristic of one who is wanting to progress through grief rather than trying to repress it. In Wolfelt's book, he suggests you ask yourself these questions. *Does your grief interfere with your ability to care for yourself and the capacity to find life meaningful? Do you find that you consistently withdraw from people and life in general? Do you suffer from distorted feelings of anger, guilt, or any other dimension of grief? Have you noticed changes in your personality that you cannot seem to control? Do you have physical and emotional symptoms that you do not understand?*

Grief Grafts

Chaps and Lu Ann Burnett's 8-year-old daughter, Anna Beth, was killed in a tragic accident, 5-9-93. Lu Ann sent this article from the **Good Foods Co-op** newsletter.

One evening about a week before Beverly died, my emotions were running the gamut from sadness at the approaching loss of a friend, to exhilaration at the opportunities this friendship had allowed, to guilt at not being able to DO anything to alter the course of events. I thought if I could just focus on something positive, my emotions would settle. So I opened my journal and began to write. The following came so fast my hand could barely keep up with the thoughts.

THE WAY IT IS...LESSONS FROM THE UNIVERSE AND BEVERLY!

1. Unconditionally love yourself and those around you every day in every way.
2. Value your work and yourself
3. Everything that happens is nothing more than a learning experience. There are no big deals!
4. Everything happens for a reason and everyone who comes into your life, even briefly, does so for a reason. Look for it.
5. Death need not be feared It's a joyous transition to another plane, a world much more beautiful than this.
6. Laugh as much as possible. Walt Disney and happy-type movies are the best!
7. Avoid negative people whenever possible. Focus on the positive no matter what.
8. If something is too hard and takes too much energy to accomplish, stop trying. . .maybe it's not supposed to work! If one door closes in your face, look for the open one right next to it.
9. If you want to spontaneously give someone a gift, just do it. Or if you own something that seems right for

someone else, give it to them now. You don't need a reason and it'll make you feel good.

10. What's happening NOW, in the present, is more important than ANYTHING that happened in the past or will happen in the future. You create your own reality, don't let the opportunity pass you by. You can do ANYTHING you want with your life,

11. What other people think of you and say about you is not important, Trust your own feelings and motivations, and act on them,

12. YOU can make a difference on a world scale by your actions on an individual scale. Raising your own consciousness truly raises that of the world For example, using all natural, non-animal treated, chemical-free products yourself eliminates your share of toxins and poisons in the world, Just as loving those people around you also raises world consciousness by adding that much more love to the world, It ALWAYS helps!

Kathy Brown

Anna Beth's symbol is a rainbow-colored cat.

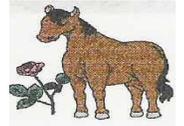


Becky, the 19-year-old daughter of Lewell and Helen Oakes died 6-11-93 when the car she was in was hit by a drunk driver. Helen said that a part of her died along with Becky that night. The entire family is having a really hard time dealing with her death, Helen shares: *There is so much pain and anger in their faces, my heart is broken for them. . .I never knew a heart could be broken in so many pieces.*

I know that I will never be the same again, but I do pray God will put as many pieces of our hearts back together as He can. I know there is one piece waiting for us in Heaven. . .And that piece is Becky.

On Mother's Day, I wore a pink dress and flower in remembrance of all our children.

A horse and rose are Becky's symbols,



Jill, the 17-year-old daughter of Oscar and Leola Cole, was killed in an automobile accident, 5-24-92, Leola sent this poem that Jill had written as a present for her Kindergarten graduating class, 15 years ago.

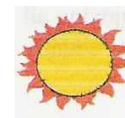
May - 1980

Sometimes you get discouraged because I am so small,

And always get my finger prints on furniture and wall,

But here's a final hand print I made for you to remember

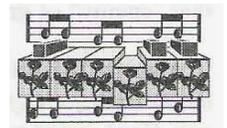
Just how my fingers looked at Kindergarten in December.



Jill's symbol is a sunshine.

Danny and Kathy Akers' 15-year-old son, Kevin, died from Acute Cardiac Disrhythmia, 12-14-93, The Aker's daughter, Amy Lyn was married 5-20-95 (Young Jim's death date.) Amy wrote this letter prior to her marriage: *Before Kevin died, I made him a promise to be happy. I have kept that promise, Kevin told me I would find the right man for me and that it wouldn't be long. He told me this the week-end before he died Rodney, went to school with me and graduated from Morehead, he was there all along. Our church will be decorated with many angels. I will have one for Kevin and a special one for your son, Jim. I will be thinking of you on that day,*

Kevin's symbols are musical notes and roses.



Paula Atkins' 19-year-old son, Jeremy, died 9-5-94, from injuries sustained from falling from a bridge.

Paula expressed in a letter, how **we all** feel on certain days: *I've had some very, what I call for lack of a better description, "blue" days lately. They seem to be very hard to shake. I wrote you a letter several weeks ago but never mailed it. It seemed such a downer and I know from experience that my feelings change so frequently that those words, although they expressed my feelings that particular day, would be inaccurate by the next. Many days I feel as though I'm an actor playing the part of a "normal" person. Amazingly this portrayal is accepted by most everyone. I feel as though I owe normalcy and happiness to Carrie and Nathan and it is for this reason, at least at this moment in time, that I push myself forward. Pity would be such a selfish thing for me to do but I do give in to it at times when I am alone.*

Don't you feel that you have written this letter? This is the reason keeping a journal has meant so much to me. I can go back and read my journals and find that I do have these "blue" days, but they are less frequent and are becoming more isolated. I again encourage you to write down your feelings and read them ever so often to see how you are progressing.

Jeremy's symbol is a twinkling star.



Ryan, the 16-year-old son of Karen Holder and Dr. Richard Holder, was killed in an automobile accident, 1-14-95. Mary Lee Kerr, who is the chair for the **Ryan C. Holder Memorial Tennis Fund**, wrote the following letter: *Ryan touched many of us with his kindness, infectious smile and laid-back manner. On the tennis court Ryan was a gifted athlete and tough competitor, determined to win and most gracious in victory or defeat. Ryan's dream was "to play Division I tennis at a strong academic school with a top fifty tennis program." Ryan was well on his way to achieving that dream. In the words of*

*UK Tennis Coach Dennis Emery, "Ryan was one of the most promising junior tennis players from this area. He had what it takes to compete in a major college program." Ryan did not get the opportunity to realize his dream. A group of Ryan's friends have formed the **Ryan C. Holder Memorial Tennis Fund**. The goal is to raise \$425,000 this year to complete the funding of the \$1 million University of Kentucky Outdoor Tennis Stadium in honor of Ryan and his dream. By dedicating center court in Ryan's memory, this facility will be:*

- * a lasting part of the legacy Ryan left us in the short time he was here,*
- * a reminder for all who use it what a privilege it is to be able to compete, and*
- * a place where other young people can dream big dreams, as Ryan did.*



Ryan's symbol is a tennis ball.

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 asked that I inform **all** who are interested about the Midwest Area Survivors of Suicide Conference to be held Saturday, September 9, 1995, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The conference is entitled, **Pathways to Healing**. For further information, you may write:

Bonnie L. Detzel
Midwest Area SOS Conference
3004 Waco Road
Lexington, KY 40503
Or telephone, (606) 277-7583.

Hugh and Ella Frazer's 21-year-old son, Gordon committed suicide, 6-20-89. Ella shared: *Gordon was a very unhappy young man for the final few years of his life and attempted suicide three times. He finally succeeded on his third attempt. He was 21. Three years after Gordon died, when I felt I was beginning slowly to surface, my mother died and from then until recently, I regressed back into my*

grief This despite the fact that my mother was 82 and I realized that she had had a long life. It was explained to me that any loss will take us right back to our initial loss-in my case, Gordon without us realizing it.

From having this explained to her, Etta feels that a huge burden has been lifted and she has never experienced such a peace. *"I now feel content to wait until I am with Gordon again, although I still long to see him every day as before. I hope you and all our fellow travelers will, with time, experience what I have. I realize there will be setbacks along the way, but, for now, I can truly say 'I'm fine' and mean it."*

Since the death of your child, have you found that you need to "do something" to make the death of your child have some meaning? Terry and Kathy Jo Gutsell lost their 18-year-old son, Andrew, 8-6-93. The family has found that "calling." They, and their children are going to Cleveland, Ohio for Kathy Jo to renew her RN licenses and become a specialist in Music Therapy. Kathy Jo has been going to Hospice patient's homes and singing to them which eases the patient's pain. Terry will have a fellowship at the Cleveland Clinic in pain management. They will return to Lexington after a year and both will be working with Hospice of the Bluegrass. We salute you for accepting the challenge of such a giving and needed ministry.

Andrew drew this picture when he was in the 1st grade.

Ed and Pat Kuzela's 20-year-old son, Chris, died as the result of a fall from an interstate bridge while drinking on 4-24-88. The Kuzelas are Compassionate Friends Chapter leaders in Atlanta, Ga. They sent a related article.



5 Ways Being An Activist Heals

When a child or sibling has died, we know that we have been hit with the worst thing that can ever happen to us. In the first few years, the term "healing" seems like a cruel joke.

We not only have to deal with the loss of our precious child, but also with a feeling of loss of control over everything. We have "been robbed."

Psychologists and crime victim advocates agree that the key component in the healing process is to try to become active and to regain a sense of control over our lives.

One way of doing this is to join a local support group. All even more powerful way is to become an "Activist." When we are ready, of course. Activism can do the following:

1. Fights feeling of helplessness and fear.
2. Increases self-esteem and relieves feelings of guilt and shame.
3. Overcomes depression by providing an opportunity to speak openly and to network with other survivors and supportive people.
4. Redirects the energy that is often spent on anger and pain into compassionate acts of supporting others.
5. Empowers us by feeling that we can make a difference in preventing a similar loss or injustice to someone else.

I believe our children would wish this healing prescription for us, don't you?

From an article in November, '94 McCall's Magazine

Pat wrote the following poem:

"FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT"

Before our son's death turned our lives upside down, I cannot recall spending any time in cemeteries. One or two elderly relatives who had lived out their span are in cemeteries now. We miss them at holidays and at other private times, but their absence actually testifies to the appropriate order of events in our lives.

I believe I attended the only true Southern Baptist church in the entire state of New Jersey, located in what

was then rural farm land. The church had its own pre-Revolutionary war cemetery, and once our Sunday School class toured it. I remember being shocked at the number of tiny markers for the very young, who, lacking our inoculations and quarantines, had died.

We were told that people had large families then because they knew that illness would take some of their children. (You can be sure the Sunday School teacher made no mention of the lack of birth control.) We were never exposed to the notion that the deaths of these children may have been a tragedy to these real people of so long ago.

Many years later, when my grandmother was in her 80's, she told me that the child born before her died at the age of three. Later, when Grandmother was about 13, she was stunned to find her mother in the attic of their home in the rolling hills of Kentucky, caressing the dead child's clothing and weeping.

I was a grown woman, parent of two children, when Grandmother told me this, and I thought, "Well, of course Great grandmother was sad, but she had other children." I didn't know, did I? Who among us did?

Now, when I visit my son's marker, I examine the other headstones carefully. Did everyone in the family live to an acceptable age? When I find one that clearly indicates the death of a child, I study the parents' markers closely. How long did they have to live without their child? Sometimes the number of years takes my breath away.

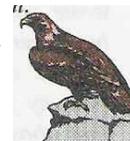
I read the inscriptions on these older markers to see if they provide any clues as to what helped those who have gone through the valley before me to carry on. I found one that I think summed it up. It belonged to a young aviator who was shot down over the Baltic in World War II. It said:

**"LIVING, YOU MADE IT
GOODLIER TO LIVE:
DEAD, YOU MAKE IT EASIER
TO DIE. "**

So--we are to endure. We do know what it was to live in the casual sense, but now we must summon whole new

dimensions of courage, love, and steadfastness. And—though we no longer hope for our own death as a release from the pain, we, unlike most "other people," will not fear it when we have finished "fighting the good fight. "

Chris's symbol is an eagle.



Eight year old Mitch, the son of Dave and Carol Warren, died in an automobile accident, 3-21-93. One of the local newspapers in their area wrote an article about Mitch's death and how the family had often felt that most of their friends were uncomfortable discussing Mitch. Carol expressed her feelings about the article: *I liked the parts of the article about Mitch, but we really didn't care for the rest of it. I really learned a lesson about the media. He (the reporter) forgot to mention any of the good things we said. I have come to learn that nobody can understand or know how to react unless they have been "there." My grief will be more personal from now on.*

Carol wrote this letter to the reporter:

Dear Mr. Moss,

Two years ago next week, you called my family and asked to write an article about our little boy, Mitch. You see, Mitch died in an auto accident on March 21, 1993, while our family was in route to meet friends in Panama City for a Spring Break vacation. We never reached our destination, and we came home never to be the same people. Mitch would have been 9 years old on March 22, so our car was also loaded with his birthday presents, and plans were made to celebrate with our friends who also have a son whose birthday is March 22.

We chose not to do the article you requested as we really felt like we were in a state of shock and were not sure if we would say what needed to be said about Mitch. It is strange how a person reacts to such a traumatic situation. I retreated into a slow motion state and let everyone handle every detail, which is totally opposite of my

normal personality. I remember every awful detail of our accident, but memories of the funeral and other events which happened the first week or more after Mitch died are non-existent for the most part.

Now two years later, I can tell you what a great child Mitch was because I am his Mom and that's what Moms do best...brag on their children. Mitch was "in between" a big brother, Michael and a little sister, Mallory, so his famous line was "it's not fair!" We feel cheated because of the future we lost with such a great son. He was smart and such a promising athlete.

He truly was one of the "good kids" and watching his friends grow up is a very tough chore. We talked with and hugged the same little guy every day for 9 years, and then one day that interaction is gone. Every night we used to lay down and read stories and all the while Mitch would be rubbing my hair until he fell asleep. He adopted that habit as a little baby and it had stuck. How I miss those little fingers entwined in my hair.

The pain and loneliness my family feels by not having Mitch with us is felt by so many other bereaved parents. We have met many parents who are traveling down this road of grief from losing their precious child. I wanted to tell you about Mitch, but I also thought at some time in the future you might want to do an article on the struggles families face when a child dies. If you should decide to write such a piece, I would ask you to urge your readers if they know someone who has lost a child to say something to that parent to let them know their child is not forgotten. We parents are so afraid that our children's lives will be erased from everyone's memories except our own where they are permanently planted. It is a dreadful journey but one that is made a little bearable by our compassionate friends.



Stars are Mitch's symbols.

Carol Vanover's 18-year-old son, Shannon was killed in a stabbing accident. Tessa, Shannon's 15-year-old sister, wrote the

following poem which she says expresses how much Shannon meant to her:

*I've been missing you, brother,
every moment since you've gone.*

*You will stay in my heart forever,
with the love that kept us strong.*

*I hope to see you someday, in Eternal Life where we will have no worries,
and meet each other again.*

*I wonder how it is, or even if
you're watching me.*

*I just wish we were still together
laughing and giggling like we use to be.*

*Although good times are still with me,
and I wouldn't trade them for a thing.*

*The memories will always be with me,
and I'll cherish them with everything.*

*You, my brother, that I love so
deeply in my heart and always will be.*

*Times we've shared, memories I
have, I will never forget them!*

*In so many ways I need you, in so
many things I do.*

*So many nights I've cried because I
want to be with you.*

*In my heart, yes you're there. You
will still be everywhere.*

*In my mind you'll always stay, I'm
thinking of you every day.*

*I take time to remember you each
and every day, because-you're in my
heart always, forever you will stay.*

*Just remember I'm still missing you
like I always do.*

*I just can't get over you're not here
anymore to tell me those little things
you use to.*

*With the sweetness of your smile,
and the love from your soul,*

You are my big brother.

*That is what I want everyone to
know.*

Your loving little sister,

Tessa Vanover

Shelly, the 15-year-old daughter of Bob and Martha Durban, was killed in a trampoline accident, 11-6-91. Last Christmas, Martha sent me a 10 pound block of chocolate. I have had great fun with it. I made chocolate molded hats and

boots for the picnic and had a large "hunk" of it out for everyone to enjoy. Martha attended the picnic with Connie Weldon and Connie asked if I had found the answer to the question I had ended the newsletter with last month. The question was: *There's only one thing better than Chocolate, and that's err...???* I didn't have an answer but was quick to hear--**The only thing better than chocolate is the friend who gives you chocolate.** So now you know, and it is true. The only thing better is a dear friend who gives you chocolate. Thanks for being such a dear friend!

Martha brought a bookmark for each of us that had Shelly's picture and the following poem:

In Memory of Sherry Colleen Durbin

*As I remember Sherry and my spirits are low,
I try to understand why she had to go.*

*And as I sit here with my memories
There is one I want you to know.*

*I remember the times she turned from the window with her face all aglow saying,
"Oh Momma look at the snow!"*

Now as I sit here and my heart breaks,

I wait to see the warm glow of her face in the snowflakes.

*Thanks for all the memories,
Love, Mom & Dad*

Shelly's symbols are snowflakes and angels



John and Connie Weldon's 18-year-old daughter, Christy, was killed with 3 others, 11-2-93. Christy's symbols are bears and angels.



Ronnie, the 23-year-old son of Shorty and Wanda Willis, was killed in a motorcycle accident, 5-22-93. Wanda described J.I.M.'s Picnic this way: *It was great to see you once again. We so much enjoyed*

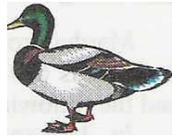
J.I.M's Picnic. Tears and laughter are good therapy for all of us and being able to talk about our children causes us to reflect upon the good memories we have of them.

We have so much to be thankful for and the friendship of others is one of the most important gifts the Lord gives us.



Ronnie's symbol is a smiley face.

Brian Jackson died in his sleep, 10-4-93. He was the 20-year-old son of Jimmy and Molly. Molly, like so many of us, is having difficulty writing about her son. She shared that Brian had already chosen a duck as his symbol before his death.



One of our fellow travelers sent a card with this caption: *Just because I haven't written, doesn't mean I haven't been thinking about you! It just means I can't think and write at the same time!* I think we all have this problem at different stages of our grief.

A friend of ours wrote this Ode shortly after Young Jim's death. He would have been 23 years old July 26, which is also my sister Elaine's birthday. We would like to share this with you.

ODE TO JIM TAYLOR

Jim Taylor - named after his dad

*Tried hard at all that he did
He put into learning all that he had
And excelled since being a kid*

He did well for his teachers at Williamsburg school

*And he made only very good scores-
He was so very smart and he wasn't a fool*

You were proud you could claim him as yours.

Then an accident happened that took him away

*And gave you a sad, broken heart-
And he's in your memory day after day
In your mind he still has a part.*

To Jim and to Dinah this verse is to you

*We're sorry this had to take place-
But look to the future when life starts anew*

*Through God and His wonderful grace.
Live life today and the days still to be
Knowing all hasn't come to an end-
'Cause after this life, you'll be together all three*

That's a word on which you can depend! -T Haywood



Young Jim's symbol is a Pegasus.

The following "wish" was found on the back of Owen H. Park's calling card:

MAY YOU HAVE

*enough happiness to keep you sweet;
enough trials to keep you strong;
enough sorrow to keep you human;
enough hope to keep you happy;
enough failure to keep you humble;
enough success to keep you eager;
enough friends to give you comfort;
enough faith and courage in yourself,
your business, and your country to
banish depression;
enough wealth to meet your needs;
enough determination to make each
day a better day than yesterday.*

Since several siblings have written, I would like to hear from you, the brothers and sisters of one who has died. Your grief is different from ours as parents and I would like for you to share your thoughts, frustrations, etc. Also, share what you would like for others to do to help you in your grief. Parents, I would like to hear from you in how you are going on with your lives with your children, and how you are helping them, and how they are helping you. I have read several

articles, etc., and will include some of them in next month's newsletter. Please send your letters, thoughts, etc., by July 15.

Brandon, the 16-year-old son of Dennis and Linda Holbrook, was killed in an auto accident, 6-17-93. Brandon would have graduated from high school this year. The Holbrooks had Brandon's classmates write about him and they put these priceless writings in a book and gave each graduate a copy of it with a guardian angel and this reminder:

As you may have noticed, there are symbols of rainbows all around. Just as a rainbow was God's promise to Noah, a rainbow is a symbol for our promise that we will see Brandon again someday. One day while standing on the cemetery shortly after Brandon's death, we looked in the sky and saw the most beautiful rainbow. Immediately, we smiled at each other and knew that we had "Our Promise." So whenever you see a rainbow, take a moment to smile and think of Brandon! As you prepare for your graduation, please know that Brandon will always be with each of you in spirit. As stated in Revelation 10:1, "And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud and a rainbow was upon his head." Please wear this angel on your graduation gown as a symbol that Brandon will always be a part of the Class of 1995.

Brandon's symbol is a rainbow with clouds and tulips.



Always keep a smile on your face, a rainbow in your heart, and a chocolate sundae in your hand.

