

LAMENTATIONS

Issue 36

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

September, 1995



This September is the third anniversary of **Lamentations**. When I began writing this newsletter three years ago, I considered it an extended letter since I was writing to so many. Now, 3 years later, the newsletter has become the catalyst that has brought us all together. We have gotten to know each other's children that have died, and we have become mends as we journey together as fellow travelers. Each time you share a poem, letter, or observation, I feel that we get to know you and your child. The reason I continue to mention Young Jim's name so often is so you won't forget him. . . as we won't forget each others loved ones.

September 4 is **Labor Day**. What is usually a holiday for most, is just another day of labor for us. To *labor* means not only to expend effort in doing or making something, but also to cultivate or strive to bring about or achieve; to treat or work out in often laborious detail. Since we have to labor on this day anyway, let's work "overtime" on striving to make this *the first day of the rest of our lives*. May this be a day that we can look back on and say that September 4, 1995, was the beginning of a new attitude and goal of working through our grief. I again challenge you to join the **S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Union**. The pay and benefits are well worth the labor.

September 10 will be the first anniversary of the dedication of the Jim Taylor, II Football Stadium. As we step on that field for a new football season, I hope all will be reminded of our son. When the

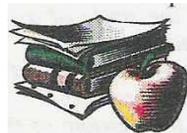
football players leave the locker room to go to the field, they pass by a wrought iron horse's head which they each touch for good luck just before stepping onto the playing field. This is always very stirring to us and we hope also to the players. This symbolizes the cornerstone of the stadium.



On September 18, 1793, George Washington laid the cornerstone for the Capitol of the United States.

*A **cornerstone** is a stone at the corner of two walls that holds them together; a stone built into the corner of a building as its formal beginning. The laying of a cornerstone is often accompanied by ceremonies.* Perhaps the cornerstone of our grief is the acceptance of our loss and the acceptance of help and support from others. We can be each others' *cornerstone*. I would like to ask you to be the "stone" that holds me upright and together, and I, in turn, will be your cornerstone. Perhaps you can place a symbolic "cornerstone" either on your loved one's grave or in the corner of his or her room. It will remind us that we have each other and we will be as strong and solid as a stone in helping each other.

William McGuffey, publisher of McGuffey readers, was born September 23, 1800. More than 120 million copies of his **Eclectic Reader** were sold, and for many years nearly all American Schoolchildren learned to read from it. An *eclectic* reader is one that appears to be the best in various doctrines, methods, or styles. How I wish we had one eclectic grief book that could answer all our questions



and give us concrete steps in working through our grief. Better yet, if we just had one magic word that would relieve that deep, all-consuming ache that goes to the very core of our being.

There is no single word, and no one book but the more we read and share with others, the more comfortable and knowledgeable we become in working through our grief.

In V. Gilbert Beers' book, **Turn Your Hurts into Healing**, he lists life-changing statements:



Fullness is not always a sign of strength, and emptiness is not always a sign of weakness. To heal your hurts, empty yourself of things that weaken you and fill yourself with things that strengthen you.



Seeds of strength are planted in the soils of weakness. Your most uplifting strength tomorrow may grow from your most debilitating weakness today.



Beauty and fragrance are released through brokenness. When you are broken, ask how you can grace the life of someone else through this experience.



The pain of separation may come from your own self-imposed isolation. Turn your hurt of separation into healing by reaching out to someone who needs your loving interest and concern.



Healing comes, not by how well you avoid all loss, but by how you respond to loss when it comes. Hurt comes whether or not you choose it, but healing comes only because you choose it.

Grief Grafts

Charles and Evelyn Davidsons' son, Chris (17), died from a massive heart attack, 11-22-93. Evelyn wrote: *I find myself waiting and hoping for the first of the month to get here so I can read the letters from Fellow Travelers I want to see how they are doing. It seems for every step I take forward, I take 2 steps backward. I find myself going to the cemetery to talk to Chris. I know he is hearing everything I want to tell him. I went to the cemetery because I was feeling so down. I sat down on the Ground beside Chris' marker, talking to him and praying for help, and feeling So lonely. I looked up in the sky and there It was, a big rainbow. It was like Chris was trying to send me a sign. I felt so warm inside. I knew he was there looking down on me. When I got home I took my mail out of the mail box to read your Lamentations. I read the part about the meaning of a rainbow. I know Chris is watching over me. He is my angel.*

I have also had situations such as these. Have you?

Chris' symbols are a basketball and balloons.



Kevin and Anne Byrnes' son, Jimmy, was killed in an automobile accident, 11-10-84. Anne has extended an invitation to any of you who are interested in a Bereaved Parents Retreat Weekend October 27-29 in Peekskill, NY. Anne says that it is a "Catholic experience, however, anyone who is comfortable within that tradition is welcome and encouraged to come." It is \$85 per person for the weekend. For further information, you may call her at (914) 769-8753 or write her at 178 Sarles Lane, Pleasantville, NY 10570.

Jimmy's symbols are a hammer and a screwdriver.



Kim, the 27-year old daughter of Jerry Stricker and Nona Stricker, took her own life, 10-27-94. The family compiled a booklet which included many pictures of Kim and several poems. This booklet was given to the many family and friends who attended her memorial service and to others. The last page has this letter:

For the Gifts that You Gave

Kim, We thank you for the many gifts that you gave to us...

gifts of your love that will stay with us in all that we do

Your love of nature will keep you close to us when we feel...

the warmth of the sunshine that you loved on your face

and that radiated in your beautiful smile

*the ocean breeze and sand under our feet where you loved to walk
the gentleness of the rain that re-freshed your favorite flowers*

the purity of the snow where you loved to play

*We can see more clearly...
the majesty of the trees and the mountains you loved to climb*

the flight of the birds you loved to watch

the ruggedness of the trails you loved to hike

the beauty of the land you loved to ride and bike

Your love of people will stay with us in...

the smile of a child that you loved to teach

the courage of the handicapped you loved to help

the wisdom of the elderly you loved to absorb

the unconditional acceptance of all human beings

the joy of your friend, whose happiness you shared

Your caring and loyalty to our family goes with us each day and we know that our special angel is making heaven a little bit brighter. We shall carry your

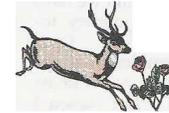
gifts in a special place in our hearts forever.



*We love you,
Mom, Dad
Melanie and Jeff*

Kim's symbol is an angel.

Judy Byer's 17-year-old son, Jamon, was killed in an automobile accident, 10-8-93. Judy is learning to express her grief through painting. She writes: *I am an artist and through my work, I find the feeling of being able to control what I do. I am working on my first picture since the absence of my son. I also sing and I have started that again.*



Jamon's symbols are a deer and roses.

Those of you who have the gift of drawing and painting, I would like to challenge you to draw or paint something that would represent our group. What a wonderful way of expressing your grief.

Tony and Sherrill Elam's 18-year-old daughter, Suzanne, died in an auto accident, 6-3-94. Sherrill described the first anniversary of Suzanne's death: *We are surviving, but the pain is so great. Last summer we were numb--reality is tougher.*

Suzanne's symbol is a lily.



Wendell and Pat Root's 14-year-old daughter, Bessie, was killed in an auto accident, 10-29-94. Pat explained: *I find that in my grief sharing helps me more than anything. After I left J.I.M.'s picnic, I thought about all our beautiful and handsome children, and I've decided to put up a large bulletin board in my beauty shop*

in memory of our children. I want all our fellow travelers to send a picture of their child to put on my board (prefer color). I want everyone that comes in my shop to be able to see all our beautiful children. Please put name, age and birth and death dates on the back.

Pat's address :
Mrs. Pat Root
Rt. 8, Box 63 C
Manchester, KY 40962

Bessie's symbols are balloons and hearts.



Janna, the 12-year-old daughter of David and Peggy Webb, died from a brain hemorrhage 7-12-93. Peggy described her grief: *Nothing is easy, yet. But neither is it as difficult as it once was. There are still those times when my heart sinks and I remember that Janna is not with me anymore. As time goes on, though, I learn how to better use those times of grief I have learned to cry when I need to, that seems to decrease the number of times when the pain grows too difficult to hear and I want to leave this world to be with Janna. More and more I am learning to live in this world again, trying once again to be a productive person, rather than living my life as if my only goal is to wait until I can see Janna. David and I have been volunteering some time at a temporary shelter for children who have been taken from their homes for various reasons. We both teach, and we have found that tutoring after school is also gratifying. In addition, after much deliberation, we have worked at a teen leadership conference. We were afraid that we would not be able to be strong emotionally when dealing with some of the concerns these children face, but they helped us and we helped them and we all made it through.*

We still find it difficult to do the same things we did when Janna was with us. Church was a major part of Janna's

life, and because we were so often in church with her, it continues to be a place where we feel much pain. We have both always been involved in the children's programs, David perhaps more than I, and we find it impossible to work with the children in whose classes Janna would now be. We still stay in contact with them and are so happy when we receive their hugs and expressions of continuing affection, but we do not yet feel strong enough to occupy the role of leaders for them as we once did. We realize that evidence of our faith is so important to them, because Janna was important to them, too. For that reason, and because we genuinely love them as we do our children, we try to come when we are invited to events important to them, and we invite them to our home. Many of them have visited; many have not. Many of them continue to bring cards and flowers to her gravesite. Their teachers tell me that many of them still write about her. Several of these writings have been passed on to us, and so many of them express admiration for those same qualities which so pleased us in Janna: her sunny disposition, her beautiful voice, her cheerleading talents, her helpful attitude, her kind actions, and her physical beauty. This is perhaps best demonstrated however, in a letter written by a child who had not even known Janna. She enrolled in their school the fall after Janna died, a time when our children were still grieving dreadfully. She heard so much about Janna that she felt she had come to know her even though they had never met. She wrote about many things she had learned about Janna and because of Janna, but I like best her last paragraph where she said:

"I would like to thank you. Although you aren't right here, I feel that you are always around for your friends, just a prayer away. We would have been the best of friends, so I know that you're up there, watching out for me. I thank you for being such a good person and living your twelve short years to the fullest. I

thank you for teaching me a valuable lesson: that friends are friends forever."

"Friends Are Friends Forever" is the title of the memorial video Janna's friends and their parents put together for us and for any of them who wanted one. That video serves as a reminder to them and to us that love goes on, even after physical death. We treasure it, just as we treasure the continued evidence of their love for Janna, shown especially in letters like the one from which that paragraph was taken, where the children tell us that they have seen in Janna reason to live a life of love and kindness, depending on Jesus as her guide.

Continue to pray for us and for our son that this journey through grief will one day soon find us a peace with our lives.

Janna's symbols are yellow butterflies and a rainbow.



Rhonda, the 17-year-old daughter of Ron and Louise Barger, died as the result of an automobile accident, 9-5-92. Louise lamented: *I think of so many of the "Fellow Travelers" I've met and wonder how everyone is doing. I received a book on accepting bereavement and it has helped me more than anything and a lot of praying and realizing that life must go on. Welling on myself and having a "pity party" daily was doing nothing but destroying me mentally, physically and emotionally.*

I have some good news. I have a beautiful daughter-in-law and her name is "Rhonda." She is like my Rhonda in several ways and I try not to make her be my Rhonda, but it's been a true blessing.

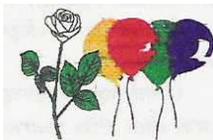
It's hard to believe that Rhonda will be gone 3 years, September 5th. I still miss her, but I'm gaining faith and overcoming dwelling in the past with all my terrible tragic memories, and praise God for victory!

Here's a prayer that seems to be what I would pray for all Fellow Travelers:

Father, eternal, we commend to thy gracious keeping the spirits of those whom we have loved on earth and now are called into thy heavenly habitation, knowing that thou art doing for them more abundantly than we are able to ask or think. Grant, we beseech thee, that we, drawing nearer to thee, may be bound together in the bonds of everlasting life and love; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

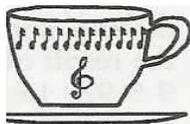
Amen

Rhonda's symbols are balloons and a white rose.



Brenda Light's 22-year-old son, Scottie, died in an accident, 11-4-87. Brenda described Scottie: Scottie had just graduated with a Business degree Major and a Marketing degree Minor - all with honors - plus he held down a job! He was my special angel!

Scottie's symbol is a musical cup.



Joanne, the 18-year-old daughter of Bob and Bonni Chapman, died in an automobile accident, 7-18-92. Bob and Bonni have planted a butterfly garden in Joanne's memory. Their local TCF (The Compassionate Friends) Chapter has also planted a butterfly garden. Most of the plants are "Pentas" which seem to be a favorite of the butterflies. Bonni said that on some days, there are hundreds of butterflies in their backyard.



Joanne's symbol is a dancer with wings for arms.

Jenny Wilson's 15-year-old daughter, B.J. Quire, was murdered, 3-3-92. For the past three years, Jenny and her family have been going through the court system trying

to find some justice for B.J.'s murder. This quest was ended 7-31-95, when the alleged murderer took his own life. Jenny is justifiably bitter about the legal system who permitted the confessed murderer to go free. As Jenny finds closure in this tragedy, may you remember her and her family.



• B.J.'s symbol is a star.

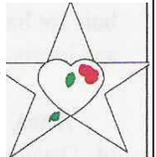
David and Cindy Jo Greever's 9-year-old daughter, Michelle, died 11-5-93. Cindy commented on last month's newsletter:

Some of the ways helpful for us in dealing with our pain is to acknowledge and accept that we are all unique and different in how we deal with the issues that surround grief, that nothing is right or wrong, but rather appropriate to our needs and we need to accept each other's expression or non-expression of our feelings. That children who are survivors need to feel loved that much more, because they are sometimes left to feel they can't measure up to the sibling that is so often talked about. That life does go on but we are never going to "get over" the tragedy, but rather, just need to learn to live with it because there is NOTHING we can do or say that will change the events that led to the parting of the child. First and foremost is our love for God and our relationship with Him that sustains us. We know, spiritually, that God ordained each of the days of our lives and even thought we humanly suffer, spiritually we are at peace, knowing that our loved one is at peace and that this is NOT good-bye, because we too will join in heaven with our loved one for all eternity! These are some of the helpful thoughts and expressions of how we cope. Our daughter, Melissa, also expresses through writing, which I do also, poetry being especially helpful.

I once made what I now believe to be the most accurate analogy of how I view my daughter, Michelle, to a friend who couldn't understand why I don't exclude Michelle and try to forget about her. I said, "If I were rendered deaf, blind and without touch and my daughter were still alive, it would be no

different than now, because just because I can't see her (in the flesh) and hear her and touch her doesn't mean that I don't love her. My relationship with her hasn't changed, she isn't lost, (she is in heaven), she isn't forgotten, she is right here in my heart as ever before and therefore she is ever as much my daughter as before!" In fact I have even chosen to sign her name on all our card., as before because she will forever be a member of our family! These are some of my feelings surrounding my child, Michelle, whom I will forever love and forever be the mother to...

Michelle's symbols are a star with a heart and a flower.



Allen Titlow, the 29-year-old son of Anne Meroney, died as the result of an accidental overdose, 3-7-92. Anne is a co-leader of **The Compassionate Friends** in Atlanta. Anne shares:

*One of the first things I heard after the death of my only son and oldest child was that people who can make some meaning of the deaths of their children can heal better from this terrible wound called grief I have been watching many bereaved parents do that. You are making meaning of your son's death through **Lamentations**. Another woman I know, whose son died from meningitis, goes around the country making speeches to young people about the value of the injection to prevent that disease. Other lost parents make meaning of their children's deaths by leading various support groups -- Parents of Murdered Children, Survivors of Suicide, The Compassionate Friends, the SIDS Society, MADD, and so on. That makes for a lot of lost, bereaved parents doing a pretty good job with their grief work.*

Allen died on March 7, 1992, at age 29, from "multiple drug intoxication." As you might guess, it was another alcohol-related death. Allen and his young wife had gone to a beach in Florida on that fine day to sit in the sun, drink and party their ways through a pleasant Saturday. Apparently Allen had a headache, for he had taken a

Therapeutic dose of Tylenol, and he also took some of his wife's Demerol prescription. At some point during the day, he had also smoked some marijuana. When he passed out in a bar at around 7:30 p.m., nobody thought anything about it, and three men just carried him to his car and let him in it. He was apparently left alone for several hours. As best I can discover, he died while in a coma. When a passerby noted that something looked wrong, and called "911," it was too late. Allen was gone. The paramedics couldn't bring him back. He was taken by ambulance to the closest hospital, some 40 miles away, and he was pronounced dead on arrival,



The deer is Allen's symbol, in my mind. Not just because he was "wild as a buck," though that would be a good enough reason.

He was a natural sports man and athlete. He was a good tennis player, and pretty good golfer (he made a hole-in-one in his twenties), but the thing he loved to do most of all was to go deer hunting at Thanksgiving time with his best friend, Kim. Those two had been hunting together since they were in high school, and Allen looked forward to that trip all year long. I remember one Thanksgiving after he grew up, when I forgot all about his annual hunting trip, and invited him to join me for Thanksgiving dinner. Allen didn't have the heart to refuse my invitation. But the "call of the wild" got the best of him, and he called late that day from across the state to apologize for going off hunting (and standing me up). The rest of the family was furious that he had "flaked out," but I understood the spot I had put him in -- how was he supposed to choose between a turkey dinner, on one hand, and his best buddy and a chance to bag a deer, on the other? The story ended happily. Allen brought me a venison shoulder roast - the best part of the deer. I made venison stroganoff, and sent him the recipe. For his last hunting trip, the Thanksgiving before he died, Allen had bought a fine new deer rifle, and he was so proud of it. He told me that this hunting trip was outstanding for him, with a good friend and a great rifle. I have some pictures

of him from that last trip, and he was one happy guy. So this big, solid "wild buck" is a fitting icon for my big, solid hunter-son.

The major question I have been dealing with is, "What can I do to make meaning of Allen's death?"

Somehow I would have hoped to be able to make some grand gesture for him, because he loved life so much and lived with all his heart. He had more friends than anyone I ever knew, and no enemies, for he never spoke ill of anyone. is epitaph, "Loved by all," speaks the truest words anyone could say of him. He was so loving and so lovable, a great big handsome man. He loved to have a good time, and he loved to see other people enjoy themselves.

I try to remember what kind of person Allen was, every day of my life, and all the good things about him. I pray every morning that God is hugging my son's soul close and taking care of his spiritual growth. Sometimes I put flowers in the church to remember him.

Certainly being a convener of a chapter of The Compassionate Friends each month helps me to give back some small part of what I have taken from that group. I thank that wonderful support group for my sanity. It's a good forum for us bereaved parents to come to and remember our children.

Since I am a lawyer, I am considering writing a law that would require tavern keepers to call "911" immediately whenever anyone passes out in a tavern, bar, or other establishment that serves alcohol. I understand that the alcohol lobby is powerful, so it would probably be a battle in most state legislatures. I truly believe that Allen would be alive today if some employee in that bar at that beach in Florida had been paying attention, or if the tavern keeper had been required by law to get medical help without delay.

It has been nearly 3 1/2 years since that terrible day, and when I am being truly honest, I must admit that the rawness of grief has been slow to soften. I miss my son terribly. I long to look into his beautiful eyes and to feel just one of his great bear-hugs again. I know, deep down, that I'll see him in another place and at another time, and that gives me hope.

Frankie, the 21-year-old son of Bob and Roxie Carrothers, was killed in an automobile accident 7-4-93. Roxie writes:

Our youngest son was killed in a car accident, July 4, 1993. His three older sisters, and older brother always got along and took care of him. Even if they didn't get along with each other.

He was full of life, always on the move, had dozens of friends. Young very loving. I took him on a day cruise on his 21st birthday. He was living with his oldest sister, Pam, in Florida. I had flown there for his birthday. On the way back to Pam's house, Frankie and I were in the back seat. Frankie laid down and put his head in my lap. was stroking his hair. So much like when he was young. Frankie was driving when he was killed. He had three friends with him. A boy named Steve was also killed. The other two boys were okay.

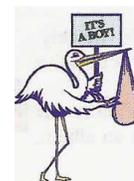
I suppose one can run on a lot of different emotions. Anger, fear, guilty whatever. In the end, I think all these help us in the beginning because it usually is sometime later we have to come to grips with the reality that they are gone. I can't believe the circumstances can change the basic fact.

Trying to think of a symbol for Frankie has been no easy task. He is in so many things for me. The best I can do at the moment is the rosary and the wind.

Perhaps, and why the rosary, is the message that all souls that have passed benefit our prayers. This, to me, is (sign of a most loving Higher Power That I can do something for my son yet, is so very needed by me, as his mother.

The second is the wind. It has no beginning...no end. We don't know where it comes from or where it goes but we know it IS. We can't see it, but we can see its effects on things around us. It can be powerful or gentle.

On Frankie's birthday, we let 23 balloons go and shouted "Happy Birthday Frankie I love you!"



Terry and Kelly Alexander are the proud parents of son, Nicholas Jarren, born 8-2-95

Nicholas weighed 7 lb. 15 oz. and was 20 1/2" long. Cole, his 4-month old brother, died 2-9-93 from SIDS. Cole is now Nicholas' guardian angel. Cole's symbol is a cherub.



I have been concerned about properly preserving the photographs we have of Young Jim. I read this information in a newsletter and thought you would like this Information. I copied it from a TCF newsletter. The article was entitled: **Photograph Preservation.**



Don't hang color pictures where a direct light will shine on them. Sunlight or artificial light will damage them.



Photographs should not be stored in attics, cellars, unheated garages, porches, etc. They don't like high humidity, heat, or freezing. Photos can expand and shrink -- aging and damaging them. The ideal temperature is 75 degrees with 45% humidity. A good guide to follow is if you are comfortable, the photos will be too.



Color slides store the same as photos. Kodachrome slides keep very well. Ectachrome is unstable for long storage.



With video tapes, long term storage condition is unknown since this method of preserving memories is relatively new. Use a good quality tape. Do not freeze or store above 100 degrees. Do not put tapes on top of TV or stereo speakers. Magnetic fields will damage or destroy the tape. A fireproof box makes a good storage container. Never store tapes partially unwound.



Polaroid photos fade quickly. Have them copied or get a negative made as soon as possible.

If you want a copy of a photo that is permanently affixed in an album,

don't try to remove it yourself. Have a professional photographer copy it from the book.

Remove fingerprints from a photo with a lens cleaning tissue. Test a corner of the photo. If successful, rub the rest of the photo very lightly.

Photo albums. The albums with "magnetic pages" or PVC plastic are detrimental to photos for long term storage. The old-fashioned albums with the little corners you glue are best and will not damage the finish of your photos.

It's best not to write on the backs of photos.

If you have a favorite photo that has "transferred ink" on it from stacking pictures, a professional color lab might be able to touch it up. Always ask for an estimate before any work is done.

If possible, always have work done on pictures that can't be replaced by a local color lab that doesn't mail the work out. It is less apt to be lost.



Never have work done on your only copy of an original photo. Get a negative made and have work done on a first generation copy.

Professional color labs can apply a permanent spray lacquer finish on photos.

Don't store negatives or photos in wax paper as the wax can rub or melt onto the photo.



Negatives can be stored safely in vue-all negative sleeves. Glasslike envelopes are also safe.

As with photos, don't store your negatives in a damp, freezing, or high temperature area. Place in a cardboard box with a lid. Silicant-gel packages can be purchased at photo supply stores. Put in box following manufacturer's directions.



Do not attempt to remove fingerprints or other marks from your negative. You might dam-

age it beyond repair. A color lab should be able to do this before they copy the negative.

When framing a picture, use a mat board in the frame so the photo doesn't touch the glass. Don't seal the back of the frame. Allow the picture to "breathe."

In talking with a computer "whiz" (other than myself of course), he suggested that you have the photos scanned and saved on a disk. This could add many, many more years to your photos, and will take less-storage space. I would also like to suggest that you keep copies of your treasured pictures and Videotapes either in a safety deposit box or in another place other than your home. If you had a fire, you would never be able to replace them.

The following are some excerpts from the book:

You Know You're Getting Older When...

- + The early movie starts after your bedtime.
- + A hot flash is not the latest news report.
- + "Some settling may occur" refers to you, not the cereal.
- + Your legs buckle but your belt doesn't.
- + You keep trying to lose weight but it keeps finding you.
- + Your birthday cake candles set off the smoke alarm two rooms away.

Sue Hutcheson sent this card:

When the news is all bad
and the sky is all gray, and
the chocolate is all gone..



It's good to remember I've always got a friend like you!! (But don't make me decide between you and the chocolate.)

