

LAMENTATIONS

Issue 39

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

December, 1995



December is a month in which we cannot hide or walk away, or become like the snowman who melts when the temperature rises, and everyone forgets he was even there. We need to find ways that will help us get through this season of merriment and festivity so we can be as S.U.C.C.E.S.S.ful as possible.

Margaret Gerner, wrote the article, *A Holiday Message*, and in it she suggested: *If this is your first holiday season without your loved one, you are probably dreading it. "How will I get through it?." Perhaps you just don't want to think about it, but the thoughts keep popping into your head anyway. Keep these thoughts in mind.*

Know that the anticipation of the day is always worse than the day itself. Know and accept that it will be painful. Allow yourself to lean into the hurt. Let the pain happen and it will lessen more quickly.

Here's a suggestion for compromise that falls between staying in bed and crying all day and keeping so busy that you can't think: Make some plans that will openly address the fact that this is the first holiday without your loved one, and that you miss him/her terribly. Tell those you will be spending the day with that this will be a difficult time for you, and that they can help you best by allowing you to express your feelings. Let them know you'll need to talk about past Christmases with your loved one, and to talk about how you miss him/her this year. If you explain this to others in advance, it can free you to discuss your thoughts and feelings

*A word of warning! Friends and relatives may see you as "morbid" or "sick" if you do some of these things, but don't let this deter you if this is what **YOU** want to do. You must get yourself through difficult days or times in ways that are best for you.*

The Boston Tea Party was a raid by American colonists on three British ships in Boston Harbor on December 16, 1773. This tea was to be heavily taxed by the British government. The colonists decided they didn't want to pay the tax, so they threw the tea in the harbor. This was one of the incidents that led to the Revolutionary War. Why don't you sit down with a hot cup of tea, and decide that you no longer want to be so heavily "taxed" by the burden of grief, and become a revolutionist for S.U.C.C.E.S.S.



December 22 is the first day of winter. It is also a time to "winterize" our home and car against the impending cold weather. When we winterize, we are protecting against the inclement elements. This is what we need to do with our grief. Let's not let it "freeze," only to be "thawed out" in the spring. Rather, let's insulate ourselves with the knowledge that our grief will become less as we work on. We can then look forward to spring. So stoke the fire of your grief and pray for a short winter with as little "freezing" grief as possible.

Heap on more wood! The wind is chill;

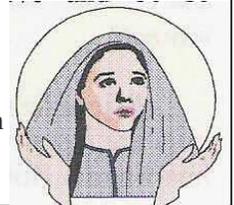
But let it whistle as it will,

We'll keep our Christmas merry still.

-- Sir Walter Scott

December 25 is Christmas. How blessed Mary had to have felt on the day Jesus was born. And then, what emotions did she have about that date after his death? She must have had the exact same thoughts as we: ***How come our saddest sadness comes from what once was our most joyous joy?*** This statement is so profound. That is the reason I send this in a card to you on your child's birthday. Mary, just like we, struggled with these thoughts. But would Mary, as we, have chosen not to have this blessed child? No, and neither would we. I truly feel as blessed as she. Even though Young Jim would not have changed the world as Jesus did, he did change our world, and for that I am thankful.

Perhaps we could have a symbolic "unbirthday" on Christ's birthday and let it represent the "rebirth" of our loved ones. I hope you will again light a green candle which symbolizes our growth, and also let it represent all of our loved ones' "unbirthday." May we be able to eventually turn that saddest day into a joyous day (or at least into a day that we can observe and be so thankful that we had our loved one.) I pray for peace as we struggle through this month.



Grief Grafts

You may want to read David Nesnow's poem when lighting your "un-birthday" candle:

*This candle is lighted for you this day,
So that we may, in some meaningful
way,*

*Share with you this season's tide,
On this special day we've set aside.*

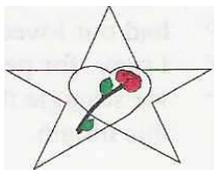
*We acknowledge lovingly from depth of
heart,
That of our family, you are still a part,
And we wish, so much, for you to know,
That we still love and miss you so.*

*Forgive us if we shed a tear,
During this most meaningful time of
year,
And know that by lighting this candle
today,
We're saying that you are in our hearts
to stay.*

It is difficult to decide how to remember our loved ones during this season, but I wanted to share some of the many letters that were received last year. Please send me your ideas for next year. We are all looking for new ideas.

David and Cindy Jo Greever's 9-year-old daughter, Michelle, died 11-5-93. Cindy Jo wrote: *I will forever love my baby Michelle and she is going to continue to be a part of my life until I join with her for eternity, I will from now on sign all cards including her precious name because she will always be a part of our family, I usually put (in heaven) next to her name, just in case somebody might think I've forgotten. She is a member of our family and certainly not lost or forgotten, so why not?*

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



Sherran McDonough-Armstrong, has had two sons die in accidents; Chris, 21, was killed in a motorcycle accident, 7-2-92, and Michael, 19, in an automobile accident, 8-15-93. Sherran shared these suggestions from Barbara Clair:

This Holiday It's OK to be Me

*To cry when the gifts are opened
To enjoy the opening of the gifts
To be angry that my loved one is dead
To be jealous when I see others with their loved ones
To sleep with a Teddy Bear
To want to cut Nov. 15-Jan. 2 out of the calendar
To be sad
To be depressed
To not buy presents
To buy yourself a gift
To stay away from holiday parties
To leave parties early
To let someone else prepare the holiday meals
To hug a tree
To go on a trip
To tell others that I must grieve in the way that is best for me
To cry, and cry, and cry
To laugh, and laugh, and laugh
To not send Christmas Cards
To sign Christmas cards any way I want to
To remember past holidays with "bittersweet" feelings
To talk about my loved one
To enjoy parts of the holidays-it doesn't mean I don't miss my loved ones
To stay away from in-laws
To set limits so that I won't be forced into stressing myself to please others
To accept help from others
To alter holiday traditions
To bum the roast
To reach out and help someone else
To feel abandoned by God
To go mountain climbing
To give myself occasional breaks from my grieving
To be aware that my tears add the rich depth of being human to the holidays*

I don't know about you, but it is comforting to have "permission" to do or not do these things. Thanks.



Michael's symbol is a hammer,' and Chris' is a motorcycle.



Judy Bowmar's 15-year-old daughter, Jessica, was killed by a truck, 10-19-93. Judy wrote this in a letter last January: *We tried very hard to not let the holidays be spoiled by grief and depression. I burned a green candle the entire month of December. My son, Adam, made an angel tree top ornament at school which he said was his sister. That was our tree top. We put all the ornaments Jessica had made on the tree and some of her stuffed animals and baby dolls around the tree.*

Jessica's symbol is a rose.



Joanne, the 18-year-old daughter of Bob and Bonni Chapman, died in an automobile accident, 7-18-92. Bonnie made her Christmas card on her computer and it contained the following inscription:

*The grace of Christmas is timeless.
As is the love for our children no longer here*



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

Joshua, the 6-year-old son of Henry and Myra Goforth, was killed by a dog, 6-4-93. The Goforths have planted a tree in their yard for the children to decorate. Last year the family placed an angel beside the tree. They have also placed two poles at Joshua's gravesite so they can decorate these poles for the different seasons and the different holidays of the year.

Joshua's symbols are a basketball and Barney.



Casey, the 10-year-old son of Frank and Beth Russell, died in a train accident, 6-20-94, with Adam, the 11-year-old son of Eddie and Janet Warnick. Beth wrote this poem:

**Adam
(He was Only Eleven)**

Oh God, Why did you take Adam, he was only eleven?

Why did you need this precious child with you up in Heaven?

This child who could hit a baseball out of the park,

But to a needy teammate had such compassion in his heart.

Who on Christmas Eve loved to ride around and look at all the lights

Until his mother and I had had enough, when with my kids, he would wrestle and fight.

Oh Lord, let there be some dirt up in Heaven for he was your typical boy, That's, where he and Casey would play with trucks, cars and toys,

When I call his house I miss his "Yel-low."

Couldn't you have chosen another young fellow?

I miss the way, when he was young, he drew me a picture of my house

Or if it was "homework time" could sneak out quiet as a mouse.

The boy who could borrow an egg, and go play, forgetting it was in his pocket.

Now his picture is silent as it lies in our lockets.

From his life was there a lesson you wanted us to learn,

For all of mankind we should all be concerned?

When he hurt Casey's feelings he couldn't sleep that night

Until he called and called to apologize for their fight.

Adam was only eleven, but he was such a good friend

To those that he cared about until the very end

If this was his mission, it was a job well done

Now he's with you in Heaven, with Casey, my son.

Now he knows all the answers and is so much wiser than we

I'm sure he has not asked Why? Now with you he should be.

I know when the time comes we will be the ones he will greet,

And take us by the hand, and tell us Why" As we sit at your feet.

In memory of Adam Warnick on his 13th Birthday, Dec., 11

by Beth Russell



Casey's symbol is a heart with "brave" written in the center.

Tony and Sherrill Elam's 18-year-old daughter, Suzanne, died in an auto accident, 6-3-94. Sherrill described how they spent last Christmas: *We made it through our first Christmas by having Christmas early with each set of grandparents and then volunteering at Oneida Baptist Institute the 22nd through the 27th. We painted our way through the holiday except for Sunday when we worshipped.*

The pain was much less intense those days away from home. This is a quote from Helen Keller:

When one door of happiness closes, another opens, but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one that has opened for us.

I'm hoping to learn to not dwell on the closed door.

Suzanne's symbol is a lily.

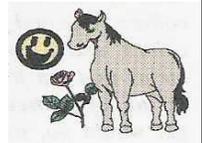


Becky, the 19-year-old daughter of Lewell and Helen Oakes died 6-11-93 when the car she was in was hit by a drunk driver. Helen described their Christmas season last year: *Nov. 19 my husband and I and our two daughters and their husbands and children and many more of our family and friends attended the Candlelight Vigil on the front steps of*

the state Capital in Frankfort. We each lighted a candle in memory of Becky. My daughters and I joined with Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, putting up Christmas trees in town. Each tree had a ribbon with your loved one's name on it that had been killed by a drunk driver. It has been so hard for us to do these things...but we feel like we're doing something for Becky.

The family also burned a green candle in Becky's window.

A horse, smiley face and a pink rose are Becky's symbols.



Dale and Marlene Stokes' 20-year-old son, Darren, committed suicide, 3-31-86. Marlene shared:

I guess after 8 1/2 years after the loss of our son, Christmas has become just another day. Last Christmas I put my first Christmas tree up outside by my front door. I put a large Christmas wreath on Darren's grave again and sprinkled my year's supply of sprinkles on and around the wreath on the ground. This looked so pretty and delicate. The sprinkles just sparkled and made me feel better.

Marlene's wish for each of us: *Hope this holiday will be a little easier for each of you. Remember, this is only a temporary separation from our children. When our job on earth is done, we will be reunited with them again.*

Darren's symbol is a deer.

Ronnie and Debra Lawrence's 15-year-old son, Micah, was killed in an automobile accident, 3-27-92.

Debra shared: *As fellow travelers, we are all hurting at this time of year, the absence of our loved ones seems so much more prominent. We are managing to enjoy the holidays and have decorated Micah's tree for the cemetery with red bows, angels and pictures of everyone important in his life, which at the top of the tree is a picture of Jesus.*



Micah's symbol is a basket ball goal.

Nick, 15, was a passenger in an auto accident, and died 6-5-94. His parents are Rickey and Deb Thompson. Deb told of Nick: *Nick had just gotten a dog in January before he died. The dog's name is Hooch and is a Blue Healer.*

We put up a special Christmas tree in Nick's room. We used his belts and bandannas for garland and put on some of his baby toys, one of Hooch's collars, blue and gold balls for the FFA colors, and a couple of special ornaments that his friends brought us. At the top of the tree where the star or angel would go, we placed Nick's straw hat that he was so proud of. And a lot of sunflowers.



Nick's symbol is a sunflower.

Alesha, the 13-year-old daughter of Roger and Pat Hunter, died from an automobile accident, 8-19-93. Pat explains their progression through grief: *The anniversary of Alesha's death wasn't as difficult this year as last. We are adjusting and the pain is not as intense as last year. We are starting to let go and smiling more. Brian and Elaine (the Hunters children) seem to have adjusted. I see Elaine doing things in memory of Alesha. Angels are something I now collect and when we shop she delights in finding a special one for me. Brian is going to college and works part-time at the Funeral Home that took care of Alesha's arrangements and funeral.*

As for myself, I have days that are sad, but I try to look to the next day as a better one and usually it is. I'm working everyday and find comfort in helping others, especially with those that have suffered a loss. So many times when death comes to my patients, I reach out to try to make the process a little easier and let the family know they can survive the pain if they allow themselves to heal.

I lost my brother 3 weeks ago. He was 49 years of age. It was a difficult time, bringing back many memories as well as the grief of my loss. Again I

found myself looking out for my loved ones and trying to help them, especially Mom and Dad.

I miss Alesha very much. When I lost my brother, Vance, the type of pain was different and then I remembered what I had read. To lose a child is the utmost pain a person will have to endure, and it's true. For my loss of a brother hurt, but in some ways the pain was not as intense and I knew I'd survive and progress through grief and could again, having learned the first time. If I chose a symbol for Vance, it would be a dove with a rose in its mouth for he loved roses and gave a rose to Mom monthly. The dove would be for the peace he now has. The following poem is the poem I placed in the newspaper on the anniversary of Alesha's death. I feel it's what she would say to me and her loved ones. I read the poem at Vance's funeral for I felt again this would be what he would say.



TO THOSE I LOVE AND THOSE WHO LOVE ME

When I am gone, release me, let me go
I have so many things to see and do.

You mustn't tie yourself to me with
tears

Be happy that we had some years
I gave you my love,

You can only guess how much you
gave to me in happiness

I thank you for the love you each have
shown,

But now it's time I traveled alone.

So grieve a while for me, if grieve you
must

Then let your grief be comforted by
trust.

It's only for a while that we must part.
So keep the memories within your

heart
I won't be far away, for life goes on.

So if you need me, call and I will come
Though you can't see or touch me, I'll
be near

And if you listen with your heart, you'll
hear

All of my love around you soft and
dear.

And then when you must come this way
alone

I'll greet you with a smile.

Forever, loved and missed
by Roger, Patty, Elaine, Brian Lee



Alesha's symbol is a heart.

Craig, the 24-year-old son of Joel and Judy Blumsack, was killed in an automobile accident, 5-4-94. Judy requested that I send the newsletter to a bereaved parent, and she made this statement: *I told a friend about your newsletter and your ability to share your thoughts with those of us who have to bear the loss of our child (actually I hate that expression. Living apart from us for a while is better.*



Craig's symbols are goggles, fins and a heart.

Doug, the 30-year-old son of Gene and Jean Gilvin, died from a brain tumor, 2-10-95. The following poem was given to the Gilvins at the hospital before Doug's death, and then was read at Doug's funeral. It is a poem that each of us could have written.

WHY?

I have sat beside a tiny crib and watched a baby die. As parents slowly turned toward me to ask, "Oh, Pastor, why?"

I have seen a gold-star mother weep, and hold a picture nigh her lonely breast, and softly ask, "Why? Pastor, why, oh, why?"

I have walked away from babyland, where still-born babies lie. A mother stretches empty arms, and asks me, "Pastor, why?"

I have watched my drunken Father leave our home, and say "good-bye," while looking into Mother's face I asked, "Please tell me why?"

I have heard the white-tipped tapping cane, which lead. a blinded eye, and then a darkened, lonely voice cries, "Preacher, show me why."

I have caught a fiancee's burning tears, and heard her lonely cry. She held an unused wedding gown, and shouted, "Pastor, why?"

*I have heard the cancer patient say,
"Tis gain for me to die," then look into
his daughter's face, and mutely whisper,
"Why?"*

*I have seen a father take his life. A
widow stand., nearby: as little children
say, "Dear Mom, the Preacher'll tell us
why."*

*I've seen my mother stand beside two
tiny graves and cry, and though she'd
never let me know, I knew she won-
dered, "Why?"*

*I've heard an orphan faintly say, Who
gazed into the sky, "Tho Mom and Dad
have gone away, my preacher will know
why."*

*I tiptoed to my Father's throne, so timid
and so shy, to say, "Dear God, some of
Your own are wanting to know why. "*

*I heard Him say so tenderly, "Their eyes
I'll gladly dry, tho they must look
through faith today, tomorrow they'll
know why. "*

*"If now they find the reasons, that their
hopes have gone awry, in Heaven, they
will miss the joy of hearing Me tell
why."*

*And so I've found it pleases Him, when I
can testify, "I'll trust my God to do
what's best, and wait to find out why. "*



Doug was a policeman
in Lexington.

Wendell and Pat Root's 14-year-old daughter, Bessie, was killed in an auto accident, 10-29-94. Pat described Halloween this year. *Bessie was gone a year the 29th. Halloween used to be so much fun for us. But now it's a nightmare. A real nightmare, but I am still here and I am some better. October 30th, we had a memorial service at the cemetery for Bess. It was a great success. There were 35 of her friends there and I didn't invite anyone. I didn't know all of her friends, so I asked a couple I did know, to ask only her close friend. We had a balloon lift off and a candle light service. I read a poem and talked to the*

*kids. Then we shared each one of us
about her. There were tears and laugh-
ter, it really felt good. The kids enjoyed
it so much. They want me to have
another one every year. They brought so
many beautiful flowers and cherubs. I
felt as if Bess was right there with us.*

*I have gotten a dozen pictures for my
memory board, but would like a lot
more. If you haven't sent Pat a picture, I
hope you will do so. She wants a picture
of your child with the birth and death
dates written on the back Send it to:*

Mrs. Pat Root
Rt. 8, Box 63 C
Manchester, KY 40962



Bessie's symbols are balloons and hearts.

Ginger, the 20-year-old daughter of Hank and Joanna Adams, was killed in a van accident, 3-24-95. Joanna described Ginger: *Ginger was our only daughter, born when her brothers were 7 and 5. Of course, she was the apple of our eyes. We have a very loving, close, Christian family. Ginger lived her 20 years surrounded by love. She led us a merry chase as we followed all her many activities. She was such a spirited young lady, putting everything she had into everything she did. As a result, she had a 3.8 GPA at Murray State University in the second semester of her junior year. She had maintained a 4.0 her Freshman and Sophomore years. She was dedicated to becoming a high school English teacher. She worked at Penny's 20 to 25 hours a week and practiced cheerleading 10 to 12 hours a week in addition to games. She was active in her sorority, Alpha Omicron Pi, served as alumni chair, receiving their **Ideal Pledge** award and the **School Spirit Award**. In addition, she was a student ambassador and Freshman Orientation counselor. I was so proud of her accomplishments, but it is her bright smile and sparkling blue eyes that I miss the most. We were best friends and spent many hours talking, shopping and planning the future. Ginger loved old treasures--quilts, hats and glassware.*

*From the cards, phone calls and let-
ters we have received, we know she
made an impact on many lives. She
was a witnessing Christian who had
led some of her church youth group to
give their lives to her Lord. She had
also consoled many of her sorority
sisters who had lost parents and
friends with her belief in a wonderful
life after death.*

*Ginger died in my arms on Friday,
March 24, 1995, the day after my
birthday. She had spent the past 6
days in the Vanderbilt Hospital in
Nashville, following the Murray State
Cheerleader van accident. She died as
a result of closed head injuries. There
were 13 people in the van. Only
Ginger lost her life. Due to the
publicity, we had family burial time
and a memorial service was held
later.*

*We have continued to function
though our hearts are breaking. I
never realized there could be such
pain. We established the **Ginger
Adams Scholarship** at Murray State
immediately. It will be a full tuition,
on going scholarship because
wonderful people from all over the
country have contributed. With
contributions to our church, we have
constructed a prayer garden with
flagstone, benches, a lamppost, many
plants and flowers and a pond with
running water. Overlooking the pond
is a statue of a little girl complete with
"dog-ears" who resembles Ginger.*

*Our families and friends have held
us close. We have spent a lot of time
reading books on how to survive this
loss in our lives. We talk about Ginger
and what she would want us to do.
Her sorority sisters have been such a
help as they visit, call and write, even
bringing dinner to our home to share
with us. We have two grandchildren, a
six year-old boy and an 18+ month-
old girl, who bring some smiles.*

*We have chosen a hummingbird
and pom-poms for Ginger's symbols. A
hummingbird lit on some fresh flowers
we had just placed on Ginger's grave.
I noticed how tiny it
was and how fast it
moved--just like Gin-
ger. She was so busy
and involved with so
many things, she
never*



"lit" in anyone place for long. The pom-poms because she loved cheerleading and had been a cheerleader for 10 years.

Chester and Geneva Meyer's 21-year-old son Clayton, died from Marfan's Syndrome, 4-5-95. Clayton was an honor student and campus leader at Mt. Vernon Nazarene College in Ohio, where he was majoring in Biology. He had been accepted to the Ohio College of Podiatry Medicine. Clayton had dreamed and expressed his intent of becoming a medical doctor when he was in Kindergarten. He renewed his goal when the medical field had saved his mother's life. He was an honor student, a statistician for the football and basketball teams, and a member of the National Honor Society, Future Business Leaders of America, and the French Club.

Tim Linker, a fellow student, and a first-year medical student at Wright State University, said of Clayton:

In the few years I knew Clayton, he not only became one of my friends, he became like a brother to me. Both being pre-med, we spent most of our class time together, and much of our tree time as well. During that time, I watched Clayton blossom socially, academically and spiritually. He not only became a leader on the campus, he did so with characteristic humility and kindness. I was especially looking forward to the day I could call him Dr. Meyer.

Clayton had a great love for his friends, his family and the Lord. On April 7, I, like many others, lost a good friend and a Christian brother. While I continue to grieve this loss, I rejoice knowing that Clayton was a man of God and now resides with the creator of this universe. I am very thankful for the time I had with Clayton, and am looking forward to someday being united once again . . . we'll have some catching up to do."

Clayton's symbol is a stethoscope.



Debbi Dickinson sent the following poem:

CHRISTMAS IN HEAVEN

*We're wondering what Christmas in Heaven is like
As we grieve alone and pray,
Longing for one who has gone before
To spend Christmas in Heaven today.*

*And so in our dreams we wander far
From the scenes and sounds of earth
'Til we catch the strains of the Heavenly choir*

As they sing of the Christ Child's birth.

*The Angels we envision there
As they join in the restal gay
And there amid the throng is our Loved One
Spending Christmas in Heaven today.*

*There's joy in the faith that teaches
When our life's work is done
Of a place in Heaven awaiting
And the crown we worked for is won.*

*In our grief may we learn well the lesson
So to work and suffer and pray
As to merit the joys of our loved one
And to spend Christmas together some day.*

Author unknown

John, the 47-year-old son of Lee and Felicia Turner, died 7-1-94. The Turners wrote this letter to family and mends:

OUR TESTIMONY AND TEARS FOR OUR SON JOHN

The most difficult time besides watching the breakdown of John's body, was telling everyone that our son had AIDS.

We never got angry with God, but at the disease. Through God's love, everyone; Hospice, our church, neighbors, friends and relatives, gave us overwhelming support. Not once did we find any rejection, which was the one thing John was very concerned about when he moved here from Hawaii.

John's room came alive when Vicki, the Hospice nurse, walked into his room. Besides the excellent care, she shared her love by hugging and consoling him. Hospice volunteers, Liz and Susan, gave

us time once a week to get away for several hours.

Last, but not least, a friend, Emogene, an Angel from Berea came everyday for four months and massaged, bathed, shaved, oiled and creamed his body.

With all this love and care, we know, in our hearts, that John's life was extended by at least two months.

Thanks to all of you and we love you.

Lee and Felica Turner



John's symbol is a dancing stick man.



I think this "Thank You" letter is such a wonderful idea. During this season of gift giving, perhaps you can give the gift of "thanks" to those who have meant so much to you and your family.

You may want to decorate your Christmas tree with angel ornaments, or use the following recipe to make your favorite design (perhaps your loved one's symbol). This recipe is from *Angels in the Kitchen*, by Patricia Corrigan.

2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup salt
12 Tablespoons hot tap water
1/4 cup powdered instant tea mix



Combine all ingredients in a bowl. Knead until smooth and firm. Roll out dough, cut "cookies" and poke hole in top of ornament for hanging. Bake in a 275 degree oven for 1 hour or until ornaments are hard. Decorate, paint or varnish Makes about 4 ornaments.



As you know, I send many letters and cards each month, and I realize that the post office and I have the same moto: Neither rain, sleet, snow nor the dead of night will keep me from my. .uh . . . **CHOCOLATE!**