

# LAMENTATIONS

Issue 45

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

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June 16 is **Father's Day** and it is another reminder of our loss. If you fathers only read one book about grief, it must be Charlie Walton's book, **When There Are No Words**. Charlie and his wife Kay's two sons, Don and Tim, died from carbon monoxide poisoning, December 15, 1992. Charlie explained that he wrote this book thinking that it wouldn't make our burden lighter, but it may help us to feel that we are not the only ones who have had this terrible heartbreak. I don't think that Charlie realizes how profound his book really is. There are so many "gems" in his book. These are a few:

*Every cell in your body is going to ache to do something to fix the problem. It cannot be fixed... and grief is the result.*

*I have the equally dangerous habit of turning anger and frustration inward... eating away at stomach linings and heart valves instead of smashing a lamp. Make yourself remember however... that those who are going through your grief with you make especially easy targets for anger. But... unlike broken furniture... human trust can never be fully replaced as you let your anger out, remember their vulnerability.*

*No one can carry your load... because they are not you. You have to carry the whole load. The straps all this pack fit your shoulders only. That's just the way it works. You will live through this.*



*You can be sure that the grief process is about to show you who your real friends are, what you truly believe, and where your real trust lies.*

*You are going to have to carry your burden the full distance. No short cuts. No magic slogans from posters or bumper stickers to suddenly snap you out of it. "The good news is that you are*

*stronger than you think.*

*When someone says I don't know how you are making it through. "I just don't think I could do it." You will smile and respond, "It's not a thing anybody can make it through... Until they have no choice. Once there's no choice... you do it... one painful breath after another."*

*I cry when I am happy. But for real pain, for actual sorrow, for life's true frustrations, I need to cry but the tears won't come.*

*I mention my difficulty in crying because it is so representative of the most important thing I have learned about grief I was doing the worst thing you can do as you grieve. I was trying to do what I thought was expected... to do what I thought others would consider appropriate... to live it the way I would have scripted it for actors in a play.*

*I have confirmed the concept: your natural response to grief is the right response for you. The worst thing you can do to yourself and to those around you is to try to express your grief according to someone else's formula... or worse still... by some set of behaviors that you assume to be standard. My grief is one of a kind.*

*In your own monumental catastrophe, you will find that a world of words can be generated by the incessant exploration or questions for which there are no answers. It is perhaps one of our natural human defense mechanisms... filling the air with talk so none of us has to admit how helpless and alone we feel.*

*What can be said? Words only get in the way. It is one of those moments in time when there is too much communication going on to interrupt it with words. When your monumental catastrophe occurs and there are no words... just let it be that way.*

*When any child dies, guilt comes to live with that child's parents. Reasonable or not, grieving people are magnets for guilt.*

*Assigning blame is a reflex reaction that has driven permanent wedges into many families.*

*There is no way to quantify the pain you are having. Pain doesn't come in pounds or ounces or gallons. You just feel like you are standing before a mountain that you are going to have to move one spoonful at a time. It is a task you call never hope to complete... a mountain that you can never hope to finish moving. But... as you stand surveying that mountain of grief... a loved one steps forward with a hug.*

*If there is one method of communication that does work in times of grief, it is the hug. The content of words is hit or miss... but sincere hugs always make clear statements.*



*A hug finds its own length and level of intensity depending on the relationship you have with the person who approaches.*

## **My prayer for you is...**

*That you will have peace. That you will have good grief. That you will be honest with yourself.. letting out what is within you... and refusing to govern your ways of grieving by what you think others might be expecting that you ought to do.*

*That you will allow your loved ones the same right to their own ways of grieving... never assuming that they should want to cry when you feel like crying... or talk when you feel like talking... or sit and stare when you want to.*

*That both your life and your death will be greatly enhanced by the perspectives that enter your life when a loved one exits your life.*

*That you will become daily more comfortable with the realization that... as Don often told me... "Death is just a part of living.."*



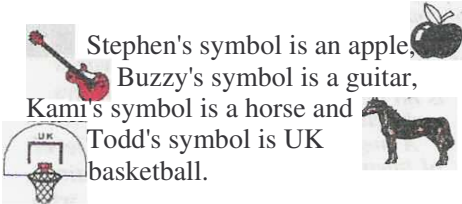
**Now I know there are some hurts that never stop hurting. Time doesn't heal all wounds. It just puts more space between the times you remember the events that gave you those wounds.**

# Grief Grafts

Gam and Becky Greer have lost all of their 4 children. Stephen, 2, died from Leukemia, 11-17-79. January 16, 1995, their oldest son, Buzzy (23) killed his younger brother Todd (14) and his younger sister Kami (10) and then himself. Gam was quoted in the Lexington Herald-Leader, January 21, 1996:

*We don't have an answer (to why this tragedy happened) But I know I'm going to make it because I think they'd want me to.*

*You know, if it had been me, I guarantee you Todd and Kami would tell you I'd want them to go all. I'm not sure what Buzzy would say.*



Stephen's symbol is an apple,

Buzzy's symbol is a guitar,

Kami's symbol is a horse and

Todd's symbol is UK basketball.

Kellie, the 16-year-old daughter of Dennis and Judy Carpenter, was killed in an auto accident 8-14-92. Dennis writes:

*In your last newsletter, you asked to hear from fathers that had lost children. Having been the proud father of a beautiful, talented, intelligent, sixteen year old, I feel I can do this.*

*First of all, I feel people who have not lost children need to realize that fathers are parents also. I cannot say how many times people at work would come up to me after Kellie's accident and ask, "How is Judy doing?" I wanted to scream at them and say, "How about me, haven't I lost her, too?"*

*Then there's the popular phrase. "I know how you feel. I lost my parents last year. etc." Isn't that the natural order of things? I lost my mother twenty-six years ago and yes, I was hurt, but nothing to compare to losing my hopes and dreams (high school graduation, college, giving the bride*

*away, grandchildren).*

*Oh yes, I also like the one about, "You are so lucky to have so many*

*wonderful memories." That is true and I am thankful for every one of them, but as you and Jim and all of the other bereaved parents know, it is extremely hard to hug a memory, touch it or kiss it good night !*

*It is also a very touching time when you have just met someone and they pop the big question of "do you have kids?" Once when we were out to eat, someone asked us this question and without batting an eye, Judy (it must have been one of her stronger days) immediately replied, "Yes we have two-a twenty-two year old son at home and a sixteen year old daughter in heaven!"*

*Isn't it also amazing that the majority of our friends now are the ones that have lost children? I think it is truly a blessing that we have each other and can talk about our children without being intimidated or worry if we are saying the right thing or making the right impression because we are all thinking and feeling the same things!*

Kellie's symbol is a butterfly.



In Katherine Donnelly's book, **Recovering From The Loss of a Child**, she verbalized:

*What society does not fathom is that the loss of a child doesn't rank with other stress emotions. The loss of one's child transcends the barrier of do's and don'ts for emotional behavior. The honest gut emotion of cleansing the soul with tears of grief is akin to lancing a wound to drain the infection. A man or a woman is entitled to the right of expiating sorrow.*

*Many fathers refrain from acknowledging that they continue to experience grief in the belief they have to mask their feelings, to hide them from view lest they be considered weak or unmanly. In so doing, they commit a great injustice to themselves. Like the octaves on a piano, a real man should be able to display Emotions in any range and in any form and grow from them.*



*Feelings inside a person are similar to a dam filling with water. If the water level has been controlled and allowed to run out a little at a time, things may get wet but won't be destroyed.*

Bessie, the 14-year-old daughter of Wendell and Pat Root, was killed in an auto accident 10-29-94. Pat sent an article that had been written about her and Joan Hobbs in the **Manchester Enterprise**:

*The pain and grief a parent suffers from the death of a child is unimaginable. No one can relate to the devastation a parent feels, after the loss of a child, unless you've gone through that pain yourself.*

*Joan Hobbs and Pal Root are two women that have been brought together under similar circumstances and are trying to help others deal with the pain of losing a child.*

*The ladies have storied "Friends," a support group for parents who have lost children.*

*Both Root and Hobbs learned through their sharing of one another's experience they could survive this pain*

*"Your pain never goes away, Hobbs said, "Your emotions just come less often over a period of time."*

*With the two ladies sharing so many of their inner feelings and thoughts, they both realized the strong need for a support group in our area.*

*Both ladies agree one of the hardest things to deal with following the loss of their children is the quietness in their home. But through the support group, they have learned to deal with the hardships of everyday living.*

*"We that have lost children to death don't have to explain things to each other," Root said "Others will say, 'How are you?' or 'Are you better?' But, there is such a thing as coping and learning to live again."*

*Both ladies truly rely upon one another and are asking for other parents that have suffered this fate to come to them and participate in the group.*

*"Had it not been for Joan being there for me when I needed her, day or night, I feel I would never have made it," Root said tearfully. "So you see, we can begin our journey through grief together. We will never be as we were before, but together we can begin to smile more and mean it, laugh more and enjoy life, without feeling guilty, see the world again as the beautiful place God made into be. No, it will never feel as it did before. But, there is a light at the end*

of that tunnel. And by the grace of God, mercy and love of our Heavenly Father, we will find it together."

If you are interested in joining **Friends**, you may call Pat at 606-598-2639. Pat wrote the following poem:

### *In memory of our children*

*May you always walk in sunshine and  
God's love around you flow,  
For the happiness you gave us no one  
will ever know.*

*It broke our hearts to lose you, but  
you did not go alone.*

*A part of us went with you, the day  
God called you home.*

*A million times we've needed you, a  
million times we've cried*

*If love could have saved you, you  
never would have died*

Bessie's symbols  
are hearts and balloons



Jim and June Brown's 12-year-old son, Aaron, died from an accidental shooting 1-8-96. June wanted us to know Aaron:

*I know that this pain I feel has to get  
lighter some time, but when? I sure  
miss my son, more every day that he's  
gone.*

*The 15-year-old son of Nim and Clara  
Patterson, Luke, reminded me so much  
of my Aaron. He died the same way  
and was turned just like him.*

*The school is putting a picture of  
Aaron and a poem or letter in the  
Middle School, and the Middle School  
year book is going to be dedicated to  
him.*

*Luke was so much like Aaron, he too  
touched a lot of people's lives.*

*When I read about Luke, I felt like I  
was reading about Aaron. Even the  
police report about Luke taking the  
bullets out of the gun and the one that  
was in the chamber, he didn't know  
about. Same thing with Aaron except  
Aaron was in a chair and he was get-  
ting up when the gun went off.*

*Aaron called me at the drug store 15  
minutes before the accident happened  
and told me to bring him some basket-  
ball cards and that he would see me  
later and that he loved me.*

*I miss little things he did. He was so  
special to his family and friends. One  
of his little friends (11) told me he was  
an angel in heaven but he was also an  
angel on earth because he loved every-  
one and everyone loved him.*

Aaron's friend, Angela Rae King,  
wrote the following poem:

### *Aaron Huston Brown*

*Did you ever have a friend  
A one special friend  
That you were sure  
Would always be around?*

*I had that kind of friend*

*A very special friend  
And his name was  
Aaron Brown.*

*The first time I met him  
Was on our very first day of school*

*He had a great personality  
He was cute and totally cool.*

*We saw each other  
Every school day*

*And for years and years  
It went on that way.*

*But on January 8, 1996*

*I heard the tragic news.*

*I cried and cried*

*Until I had no more tears to lose.*

*I miss him more and more*

*As the long days go by.*

*I miss his big smile*

*And the way he always told me, "Hi"*

*I guess I took for granted*

*That he would always be around*

*But even though he's not here anymore  
In my heart, my most special friend will  
always be*

*Aaron Brown.*

Aaron's symbols are the sun, because he was the family's number one sunshine, a heart with wings because he touched their hearts with love, and a bass fish because he loved fishing.



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. Ed wrote the following last spring:

### **THE BEES**

*On a Sunday at sunset, we went to the  
cemetery to do some gardening, and to*

*water the pansies and violets, and to ...  
"visit." While making our rounds of the  
other markers belonging to children of  
our support group friends, I became  
aware of the honeybees. They were  
having a difficult time. They were con-  
tinually going to the artificial flowers  
and trying to extract nectar where there  
was none.*

*After a determined effort they seemed  
to realize that they were losing vital en-  
ergy and valuable time, and they flew  
away. I felt a kinship with them, a  
compassion for their struggle and con-  
fusion. When I go to the Decatur  
Cemetery, I too have a difficult time,  
continually going to an artificial place,  
trying to extract some meaning for hav-  
ing to be there. I too have a sense of lost  
energy and a confused struggle. The bee  
is more fortunate. He will find the real  
flowers; I will have to continue my  
struggle for all time to come.*

Chris' symbol is an eagle.



Owen and Carol Peltier are founding members of **Hope For Bereaved Planning Committee** and are active volunteers. Their son was killed in an automobile accident in July of 1979. Owen lamented:

*There is no timetable for grief. Your  
grief may be longer or shorter than  
mine. After all these years, I can say the  
raw wound has become a scar I can live  
with. How and when did I get here?  
What is a father to do? I am not really  
sure what the process was, and it  
happened gradually, almost imper-  
ceptibly. I know that being a part of the  
Bereaved Support Group was re-  
sponsible for much of my recovery. How  
did sitting in a circle of people listening  
to all their pain help? I don't understand  
how, but in some way letting others' pain  
I, enables you to let your own out. With  
the help of some very good friends, I  
have been able to get to the place where  
I can spend more time thinking about  
what I have left than focusing on what I  
have lost. I still feel cheated at times  
because I don't have my son, but life is  
worth living again.*

*Fathers hurt, too. We need to be al-  
lowed to be human. We need the chance  
to travel through our grief with*

*the support of others. You are not alone. I have been there and so have many others. Sharing the burden lightens the load.*

Ronnie and Magoria Bottom's 16-year-old daughter, Tammy, died from Cystic Fibrosis 7-23-85. Magoria voiced:

*Tammy was our beam, our ray of light here on earth. She had a beaming smile that was radiant, bright, and cheerful. You would never know she suffered with Cystic Fibrosis. She kept it hidden till the end. I guess we were one of the lucky ones if you could say that in the loss of your child. Tammy told us "Good bye." She said she had a happy life here, and she wasn't afraid to die, and that it was beautiful there. Her only concern was leaving us. She was worried about what would happen to her family. Tammy had a good life except for her illness. She loved everyone and everything, old people and young, all the animals, butterflies, rainbows; all God's creatures. People would say they learned more about faith from Tammy. She always made sure people would laugh. She touched everyone she knew.*

*Tammy loved her school, teachers, friends and cheerleading. Her Freshman year in high school was great. She was president of her class. She was "Miss Freshman," she received 110% Spirit Award in cheerleading, she also received an FHA Award. But her illness got worse and Tammy became sicker. By the time she was a Sophomore, she began spending most of her time in the hospital.*

*She was put on Homebound. The teacher came to the hospital and Tammy kept up with her school work. This was important to her. She always had a pile of books on her bed-side table. Tammy was 11th in her class for the year 84-85, with a GPA of 3.5. But this wasn't good enough. She wasn't happy. She wanted to do better. I reminded her how wonderful it was with her being so sick and working so hard and being homebound.*

*Tommy is remembered as knowing what she wanted to do and willing to put forth the effort. Her love for Jesus and people were her main drives in life.*

*Tammy was Vice President of FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes). There is a large plaque at her high school in her memory with names.*

*Tammy had so many symbols that it was hard to choose. Tammy took dancing lessons for ten years. She was three years old when she started tap and ballet.*

*Tammy kept a journal and the family has taken some of the excerpts and included them in a booklet entitled "Be Not Sorrowful..." These are a few:*

*Why can't I just be normal like every body else?*

*Why can't I just run and not fall down, gasping for breath, my sides and head throbbing with pain?*

*I want to cheer, work, go to school, have fun.*

*Damn, I can't even play with my dog without getting tired. I would give anything just to be well. I just want it to end.*

*Fighting, losing, going down in battle. Dying... Why?*

*My struggle so valiant, brave... Why? Dying but still fighting.*

*Dying but never giving up.*

*Why?*

*Proudly, majestically, I leave.*

*Happy, content, I leave.*

*I have done what I could till the end.*

*I leave.*

*I leave forever.*

*We should never be alone when we suffer.*

*We should never build a self-imposed wall around us that allows absolutely no one inside to see what we are going through and hurt, with our hurts.*

*For if either of them falls, one will lift up his companion.*

*But woe to the one who falls where there is not another to lift him up.*

*Ecclesiastes 4: 9-10*

*(I believe Tammy has written this to remind us that we, our fellow travelers, have each other.)*

*God has chosen me, for what I know not.*

*Through pain, pervasion and agony.*

*I have suffered. The reason I know not*

*why. Through doubts and temptation, I have been unwavering in my faith; clinging to it, my only hope.*

*Tired now of pain and strife. I seek rest, the prize that is mine, I fear not death, for death is peace and rest.*

*Death ushers in a new life for all who believe.*

*A life free of pain, sorrow and strife. A wonderful gift from our merciful God.*

*Be not sorrowful when I die.*

*I have fought a hard, bitter battle.*

*The prize of rest is mine. Earned through pain and strife.*

*Be not sad, for the prize of peace is finally mine.*

Tammy's symbols are a cheer leader, a ballet dancer and an angel.



Magana concluded by saying:

*In her sixteen years, she touched so many lives with her wisdom and faith in God. It has been ten years, but the pain in our hearts never heals.*

Garrett, the 9-year-old son of David and Linda Witt, was killed while riding his bicycle on 5-28-94. Linda conveyed:

*We are struggling daily in coming to terms with Garrett's death. It seems that we fluctuate between intense pain and denial with working extremely hard to hedge of the pain.*

*Please continue to remember us in our journey. We try to do our grief work. We have traveled very far, but have much to go.*

*Some days we cope rather well, others we teeter between insanity and pain.*

*We are trying to regain some ability to feel joy again, especially for our son, David. He is so precious. We care for him so deeply, but it is hard to experience joy.*

*We do try and I think we'll get there.*

Willie and Ella Prater's daughter, Merri Kathryn (17), died from an automobile accident 4-3-96. An article in the **Western Recorder** told so much about Merri Kathryn's witness during her life and also in her death:

Sorrow mixed with joy as an accident took the life of Knott County Central High Schools cheerleading captain April 3. Her testimony in death brought hope for new life to more than three dozen of her classmates.

Merri Kathryn was a member of First Baptist Church of Hindman She died six days after her car ran off a rainslicked county road and smashed into a telephone pole. The accident occurred after she had taken dinner to two friends and was delivering a school report to her boyfriend.

That friend, John Sparkman, was the first person who committed his life to Jesus Christ as a result of Prater's witness.

Crowds of 25 to 60 students filled the hospital corridors throughout the six day vigil before her death.

Sparkman often stood next to the pastor during twice-daily prayer services and finally told him, "I've got to receive Jesus into my life."

The pastor said that touched off a wave of students coming to him to talk about their spiritual relationships.

"I've been in ministry since 1976, and I've never seen anything like it," said Pastor Caudill, who baptized Prater in 1989. "We've experienced tremendous hurt and sorrow, but everything we've recorded is amazing."

Prater's parents are proud that their daughter's witness has created such an impact on the community.

"Her father and I rejoice," said Mrs. Prater, an English teacher at Knott County High. "It hurts that she isn't here to be part of this in the physical sense, but I know she is rejoicing from heaven's doors."

A member of the National Honor Society, Prater was in the top 10 students in her class, was a student council officer, and had participated in mock-trial competitions.

She also led the cheerleading squad that made it to the quarterfinals of last month's state competition. To honor her memory, the entire team presented their ribbons to her mother.

Jill, the 17-year-old daughter of Oscar and Leola Cole, was killed in an automobile accident 5-24-92. Jill was described:

Jill was a special blessing from God for her family. When the doctor presented this perfect baby to her parents, her father reached for her and held her with unending love. Jill was truly "Daddy's little girl." The first time this precious daughter stood up, it was by reaching for her father's shirt and pulling herself up.

Jill began school in Kokomo, IN. Her first day at school was eventful, for it was also the day she learned to ride her bicycle. Her father was her coach as he lovingly lent his support and gently let her go.

Jill was always active and alert. Her basketball and softball playing ability won her recognition as one of the best in her school. She enjoyed the out-of doors and loved to accompany her Uncle Doug to see the chickens and to feed the cows.

Jill's presence has always been a blessing from God. On one occasion, when her family had moved to a larger home, Jill somehow got lost. Her parents were terribly frightened and concerned. Her mother prayed that God would reveal her presence to them. When she returned into the house, Jill was sitting just behind the couch. The sunshine again filled their hearts.

The Cole family returned to Magoffin County to live when Jill was in the eighth grade. Jill quickly made many friends, maintaining a depth to these friendships which, she related, she had not had previously. She enjoyed school and was active in many activities including **Champions Against Drugs** and the high school choir.

Jill was a friendly and caring person, cheering others up when they were feeling low. Her sweet spirit and her sense of humor radiated. Her strong, moral teaching at home was evidenced in the relationships that she had with others. Jill seemed to enjoy sparking conversation as she challenged others, particularly adults, with her unique kind of inquisitiveness.

Jill graduated from Magoffin County High School on Friday, May 22, 1992. Her class was admonished that some would perhaps face tragic life situations. As her class shared with each other their feelings of being at "the end," no one imagined the immediacy

of tragedy and the next step to maturity with which they all must now deal.

To her friends and classmates, memories of school, the senior trip and **Project Graduation** will remain To her family, Jill will always live in their hearts. Those early years of "Daddy's little girl" and the later years of that special mother-daughter relationship with those nightly conferences will always be a part of them. And to many, she will be remembered as she stood smiling before the church that morning, recognized as a graduate and receiving a Bible as she embarked on a new and unknown phase of her life.

Jill's parents enjoy a picture they have of their precious daughter at six years of age, sitting in a field of flowers. We can all envision Jill now in heaven; a flower in God's kingdom.

Jill's symbol is a sunshine.



Anna Lamb's 17-year-old son, Randall Mahan was killed in a cave-in 8-12-63. Anna contended:

Randall was at church and Sunday School every time the door opened.

His Sunday School teacher always called him her little "preacher boy." How proud we were of him, but God is so good and full of mercy. He didn't intend for us to know what tomorrow would bring. Thank the Lord! But oh, the joy and happiness he brought us those 17 1/2 years.

Giving up our children is something we will never get over. Randall was such a happy, loving child. He loved everyone, and all loved him. He was Daddy's little farm boy. He loved the animals



so much, especially horse and new born things. He loved to build little things, bird houses and little sleds.. just like his Dad.

I have two lovely daughters, each married and each have 3 girls and 1 boy. 9 greats and 5 great greats. Oh! All are so precious.

Randall's dad passed away in '76. He never got over losing his little boy. Neither did any of us, but we have to accept it and go on with our lives.

Anna wrote this on the first anniversary of Randall's death:

*Silently the shades of evening gather round our lonely door, and they bring back precious memories of the one we see no more.*

*The accident that took your life left our hearts Oh! so sad! It hurt us all, but most of all, it nearly killed your Dad!*

*We knew not, Randall "darling" when night had veiled the sky, that when we came to see you that night, it would be our last "good bye." I dreamed of you the other night when everything was still.*

*I thought I saw your little car coming up the hill. You drove on up into the drive and hollered, "Mom, where's Dad?"*

*Then I woke and realized it was just a dream I had I walked over and kissed your picture and saw that smile upon your face.*

*I thanked God there'd be no more cave-ins. For he'd taken you to a better place.*

*When He looked down into that hole His heart was greatly stirred He said, "Now, son, you come with me. I've a better place prepared"*

*Little did you realize, Randall, when you went down in that hole that you son would be crossing over where the streets are paved with gold. No care, no suffering there, for God had bid you come. Yes, only 17 short years. Your work on earth was done.*

*But Randall, again our thoughts turn to our Savior as he hung there on the tree. "Father," he prayed, "forgive them all for what they've done to me."*

Anna has since married her childhood sweetheart.

Andrew Gutsell (18) died from a congenital heart defect 8-6-93. Andrew's parents, Terry and Kathy Jo, have been living in Cleveland the past year. Kathy Jo explained what they have been doing this past year:

*We're about to wrap up our year in Cleveland It has been wonderful. We needed this year to back away a bit, take time to cry, derail, reflect. For myself, I've enjoyed the time to learn harp and go toward my certification in Healing Touch. Both modalities have been so comforting and healing for me.*

*I want to share them with others, particularly the dying. I have loved **Malachi House**, a Christian ministry to the dying poor, where I take music once a week. You could safely say we have bonded--**Malachi House** and I! Don't let me think yet about saying good bye.*

*Terry has really enjoyed his work at Cleveland Clinic. He's taken to palliative care like a duck to water. We are at home with the values of palliative care. It is so people-centered as opposed to technology, high-powered, high stress-centered. It is geared to comfort, to support, and to spiritually heal.*

*So we have to leave the cocoon in 2 1/2 months and come home to Lexington to put all this training into practice. We're nervous. Will we get sucked into a speedy, unhealthy lifestyle or can we stay centered, gentle, people-centered? Pray for us, as we do for you.*

*We dedicated a waterfall and courtyard at Lexington Catholic High School in Andrew's honor.*

Andrew's symbol is UK basketball.



Bill Keith, the 17-year-old son of Judy Oaks Davidson, died from an automobile accident 9-29-87. Dr. Davidson is now the Executive Director of the **Renew Center for Personal Recovery** in Berea, Ky. Judy lost her first husband, Joe, in a tractor accident in 1977. She wrote this column shortly after Bill's death:

*Our family had always been free in the expression of love for each other, but the lesson to do so each day was reinforced with Joe's death.*

*At seventeen he was really enjoying life to the fullest. He was rapidly growing up and the Sunday he died we had a long talk about his emergence as an adult. I told him how proud I was of him.*

*As an adolescent he had not always been easy to live with, but he had experienced significant personal growth in recent months. One major step involved the request to move his bedroom from the house to the studio over the garage. It represented a move out-of*

*the house because it had a private entrance. I recognized his need for independence and agreed.*

*He seemed to enjoy his solitude while I missed having him near. Three days later the phone rang about 11 p.m. A voice began singing Stevie Wonder's song, "I just called to say I love you." I asked him if this was an obscure phone call. He laughed and said "No, Mom. I was just thinking about how much I love you."*

*I had given Billy a new truck at the beginning of the school year so that he could date, play sports, and have the freedom to enjoy his time with his friends. Shortly after leaving his girlfriend's home, he encountered litter in the road and swerved to miss it, losing control of the truck.*

*As I drove to the hospital, the fear overwhelmed me. I prayed that God would not take him from me too.*

*During the days in the hospital, Bill faced three surgeries. Chris (son), aged 12, stayed with me at the hospital. As the reports became more negative, we wavered between hope and raging fear that could not be contained "What will we do without him, Mom?" "We'll have to go on living and we'll have to help each other" I replied Powerless and helpless are the feelings we shared. It is hard to reassure a child when you feel so insecure yourself.*

*Chris and Bill's friends were allowed into the intensive care unit frequently. At first they asked if I would go with them. I very carefully prepared them for what they would see. As time went on and his condition declined, they began to need more private time alone with him. Chris asked me if I believed he could hear him. I assured him that I believed he could Chris told him how much he loved him, that he was sorry about all the fights, and that he was really sorry about calling him names. I told him that I knew that Bill loved him too as was evidenced by the last day they had spent together and that all brothers fight and call each other names sometimes. We regret every little thing when life hangs in the balance.*

*The final report came. The swelling had continued and the brain was dead. Chris and I took a long walk around*

the hospital. I explained that Billy's spirit had left his body and had gone to be with his Dad. His organs were being kept alive by machines and we had to decide whether we would be willing to donate them so that others might live. He asked if the doctors could transplant a new brain for Bill. I told him that they hadn't learned how to do that yet. He was angry. Then he said that he wanted to donate the organs because that was what Bill would have wanted... to help others live.

When Joe died, I felt that I lost not only him, but the part of myself that I had invested in him. When Bill died, I not only lost him, but also the parts that he gained from his father and from me as well. While I miss him greatly, I believe that he is with his father who must have also missed him terribly these past ten years.

What keeps my day-to-day existence stable? A former student from my death and dying class says it better than I can.

#### **Billy**

*Billy, a vapor of life swept off into the air.*

*A young man who loved his mother and knew she cared*

*Billy, a strong bright, gentle young man that he would be.*

*An intelligent son that Judy gave birth to for the world to see.*

*Billy, the joy and star light of his mother's eyes.*

*A loving memory in her heart that will never die.*

-Andrea Powell



This piece does not give the connection to Billy's symbol of a shooting star. My best friend, Melodie, was with Billy when he left his body. Because she had stayed with me for the entire hospital stay, Melodie had to return to work to make arrangements to come to Kentucky for the funeral. She had been my "safe" person and protector during this ordeal. I drove with another friend in a van so that Billy's best friends could come with us for the second funeral. Melodie had to fly. As she was walking down the steps of the airplane, she saw a shooting star headed straight for Berea, KY. As her eyes followed the star down toward the earth, she also saw Billy's casket being removed

from the plane. She did not know until then that his remains were on the plane. We both felt that she was bringing him home and his way of telling us that his soul was free was through the shooting star.

The experiences I had with my son's friends, my son's teachers, and principals which extended over weeks because we organized a community clean up to pick up trash, his friends planted a memorial garden, and the mayor and I organized a Christmas celebration of lights, are what guided me to do the work that I see a need to do.

**The Renew Center** is planning a seminar, October 24 entitled, **Spiritual Crisis Following Loss**. Dr. Jim Miller will be the keynote speaker. Dr. Miller has made a tremendous impact in the areas of loss and transition. Panel members will be Dr. Paschal Baute, Curt Davis who has lost two sons, and Chip and Nancy Miller whose son died from AIDS. More complete information will be given in future newsletters. If you have any questions, you may telephone Dr. Davidson at 606-986-0780.

Gary and Phyllis Risk share their loss.

Our only daughter, Dana was killed in an automobile accident on February 6, 1995. She was 24 years old that day. Dana had just left my home with her grandmother following her to take a cherry table that my father had made for her as a birthday present. Dana's house was only 500 feet from my house. I heard a loud crashing noise but thought it was from a company that hauls trailers up the road. A 16 year old girl who was driving for the first time by herself hit Dana's car on the driver's side at approximately 30 miles over the 35 mile an hour speed limit.

Everyone told us we were granted special time with Dana as she was alert to talk with us for 5 hours before she went into surgery. She had several broken bones we knew about and would have had a long road to recovery, but we were given hope that she would make it. When they entered surgery,

they found that her liver had been ruptured and they tried to repair it. When the doctors came down and told us that the surgery was unsuccessful, our lives came to a sudden end. Our life will never be the same. She was our hope of the future and now she is gone. I believe she is gone for a while and Dana will return to get us when it is time.

Everyone asked "Why?" How could this have happened to such a special person, just beginning her married life. She had a new job with the school system helping special children. At 24 she had such a happy attitude about everything. She was a joy to be around and never caused any trouble growing up. How could the Lord take my beautiful daughter from me? When I asked this question, I was told that the Lord needed a very special angel that day to take care of all the little children in heaven and he came and got the best.

We will always love Dana and will miss her every day. She was our special reason for living. Now each day is a heartache missing her. We wrote her an inscription on her stone in the cemetery. It says:

Dana,

No one will ever know the happiness you brought us. It broke our hearts to lose you, but you did not go alone. A part of us went with you the day God called you home. A million times we've needed you, and a million times we've cried. If our love could have saved you, you would still be here alive.

We will always love you,  
Dana

Dana's symbol would have to be an angel. There is nothing in this world that could describe her better than being a beautiful angel working for God and his children in Heaven.

Gary and I want Dana to know that she was our whole life and until we meet again, we will never be whole. We know that she is free from pain and heartache with wonderful beings around her, but that does not ease the pain of her not being with us.

Our prayer is that God take good care of our darling daughter, Dana Renee Long Simpson until we enter Heaven and can be with her again.

The following poem was given to the Waco Elementary School where Dana taught. They asked us to write because

they were dedicating their 1995 year-book in her memory. They wanted a poem written about Dana that the young children could understand.

**In Loving Memory of Dana Renee  
Long Simpson February 6,1971 -  
February 6,1995**



### HEAVEN CALLED

There were so many things I wanted to do...

So many places I wanted to go...

So many people I wanted to meet...

So much love I wanted to share...

So many students to show I care...

So many sounds I wanted to hear...

When God said thou shalt not fear...

For all my friends and family for whom

I love so much...

I now ask God to bless and touch...

God said his children I need to help...

So I have ascended Heaven's steps...

Never, Never be afraid to die...

For now I am an angel waiting for you  
in the sky...

Jennifer McClung's 6-year-old daughter, Jennifer Rose, was killed in a tragic automobile accident 11-26-93. Jennifer writes:

*It's going to be a great summer. Kristy (her daughter) is going to diabetes camp. She's going to play softball. We have a trip to Kentucky Kingdom planned and a trip to Mammoth Cave.*

*A few months ago I joined The compassionate Friends. We meet in Taylor County. Every time I go, I cry a river but I feel really good inside when I come out.*

*On Jennifer's birthday, I went to the cemetery three times. I took a birthday balloon before I went to work, then I visited during my lunch break, and then I took Kristy out after work. She took some birthday roses. I believe I could have stayed out there all day. It was a very quiet and peaceful day for me. I tried to make the best of it.*

An angel represents Jennifer because she is



"an angel in heaven" A white rose is also one of her symbols because "Jennifer" means white in Latin.


Dorothy Wilson's daughter Janet was murdered by her husband 11-24-91. Dorothy conveyed:

*I think of you so much, as I do all others who have lost a child. You are in my thoughts and prayers.*

*I was sick all of January, February, and March. I found out I have an ulcer and a hiatal hernia. Heart acted up in January also and doctor put me on another heart tablet. Stress is beginning to take its toll on me, it seems.*

*Hope to get to the picnic if possible.*



Janet's symbols are an angel playing a harp and a cow. 

Gary and Angie Cunningham's 21-year-old son, Ernie, was killed in an automobile accident 11-10-95. Angie has written what we have all thought and all experienced:

*How can the pages of the newsletters bring me comfort when they are filled with the grief of others like me? Right this minute, I don't want someone who will tell me that the sun will come up tomorrow or that I have three children who still need me. I know that. I want someone who will mention Ernie's name first. To understand that Ernie is always on my mind*


*I visited my aunt with two of my sisters-in-law last Sunday. I hadn't seen her for five months--since Ernie's funeral. She didn't mention Ernie. I sat and listened to them talk till I wanted to scream "Don't you know my son is dead!"*

*I realize that some are thinking that if they mention Ernie that we'll get sad or, worse yet, we may cry. They are trying to be kind.*

*Will I ever feel human again? I have no comforting words or uplifting poems to share. I have a gaping hole that more and more seems to be filling with a burning rage. It feels alive inside my chest. It grows and hurts. I want someone to help me, but no one can bring my son back to me.*

*Do you remember the children's book, The Runaway Bunny? It's about*

*a boy bunny who keeps talking about running away and disguising himself, so his mother can't find him. But he doesn't do it because his mother is a good mom and no matter where he goes, whatever he does, she could find him. He decides to stay home and be a regular bunny and his mom takes him in her arms and hugs him. I can't find my son. I feel, sometimes, that I should go where he is. I want to know that he is okay.*

*We have decided on a symbol for Ernie. It was difficult, but we chose an apple. A shiny, red apple. They're good for you, they're beautiful. Ernie, along with his brothers and sister, is definitely the apple of our eye. As his career ambition was to become a communications professor, it seems a good choice. An apple* 

*for the teacher.*

*Oh, how I'd love to see him, to touch him right now.*

*We look forward to meeting everyone at the picnic.*

David and JoAnn Westerman's 19-year-old son, Michael, was killed 1-15-91. David wrote to us:

Dear Fellow Travelers,

*May 5, 1996, gloomy Sunday morning as I sit in our backyard, our puppy lies quietly by the swing as I write, the birds sing happily from the trees above. As most have all their leaves now, most flowers are in early bloom as I look across to the outline of the woods to see many dogwoods in full bloom. There go two deer running freely in God's green land Michael would go wild when he saw a deer. This was one of his favorite sports, hunting.*

*Today is supposed to be one of my happiest days of the year. Married 23 years today. Still working for the same employer as then. We have come a long way. When we got married I was making \$7 a day. We had 3 children; we lost 2 houses to fires, lost both of my parents, my mother 1 month after Michael was murdered. It was more than she could handle; lost a brother-in-law, my mother-in-law, all my grandparents. But through all of this, Michael's loss has taken away a part of me.*



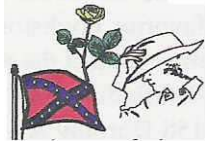
This would be his favorite time of the year, when everything is so pretty outside. He loved the outside, hunting, camping. There goes someone down the road hauling a 4-wheeler; that was so like Michael. If he was in his truck, most of the time he had his 4-wheeler with him. He loved riding it and was very good at it. At family get-togethers he would bring it over and we would ride.

When Michael was murdered, he was like many of the trees and plants I see now. At the age of 19 he had just started to blossom into life. To make the best of life. He could and he was going to be a great dad.

God called Michael home and in return he sent me 3 grandchildren, including Michael's twins, and many wonderful friends as all of you are that are reading this. I call you my friend. Many loving and understanding new friends at **The Compassionate Friends**.

The skies are trying to clear up a little now. I think I will plant some more flowers today, maybe a total of 19 in one flower bed alone. I need to do something on this supposedly happy day.

The Westermans have chosen a cowboy hat, yellow rose and a concentrate flag as Michael's symbols.



John, the 48-year-old son of Lee and Felicia Turner, died 7-1-94. Lee shared:

I am a 72-year-old father of 10 children, 15 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren. My oldest child is 52 and youngest is 31. The second birth was a set of triplet boys born 7-11-46. One of the triplets, John, died from AIDS on 7-1-94. His last four months were spent in our home, being ministered to with love and understanding by his family, many friends and our church.

Even though it has been two years, John is still greatly missed. I think my grief was expended during the constant daily care, and watching a healthy, vibrant body of a 48-year-old man being destroyed by this debilitating disease. During the last days, even when John could not talk, we were still able to

communicate by loving touch and eye contact. When John passed away at 2:00 AM on July 1st, he was in his triplet brother Jim's arms. I believe my deep grieving stopped at this point, knowing that his suffering was over, and he would be with the Lord.

Paul summed up all of our hope in I Thessalonians 4:13-18: "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and who are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore, encourage each other with these words."

I would encourage others to read and reread these verses for comfort and hope in their grief as we all look forward to the day when we will be reunited.

John's symbol is a dancing stick man.



Michael and Linda Miller's 18-year-old son, Michael, was killed in an automobile accident 2-15-95. Michael D, was their only child. Michael conveyed:

In the months following the death of our son, Michael Duncan, there were times I felt compelled to write something.

Since you requested something from the fathers, I am sending a copy of one of these writings:

#### A Letter to My Son

Dear Michael D.,  
Where are you?  
I miss you.  
I've lost you, and I don't know what to do.

I look for you, but all I see is the darkness of despair.

I listen for you, but all hear is the silence of loneliness.

I reach out for you, but all I feel is the cold of emptiness.

Your bright, impish smile, soft, confident voice, and warm, strong touch are, now, precious memories.

I know you are safe and beyond all harm,  
an angel in God's gentle care.  
I know I should take comfort in this.

But it's hard.

It's hard seeing the pain in your Mother's eyes.

It's hard seeing your bed not slept in.  
It's hard eating a meal with only two places set.

It's hard getting up each morning to face another day without you.

But, the hardest thing of all is being a daddy without a son to love and teach.

The day you were born, you were our little angel.

Now, you are our Cowboy Angel, watching over us, as we did you.

I miss you.

I love you.

Daddy



Michael's symbols are a cowboy angel, a football, and the #77.



Luciana, the 15-year-old daughter of Lucia and Skip Bayne, was accidentally shot 4-30-94. Skip wrote:

Hello Friends,

Last week was the second anniversary of the death of our daughter, Luciana. It reminded me how differently my grief was from my wife's. I wondered if most fathers felt they carried a heavy burden in their hearts, and kept a lot of the emotional suffering to themselves, because they didn't want to burden someone else with their problems, or felt no other man would understand their loss of that child. I guess it's a male pride thing from the time we were young boys, we were taught to stand on our own two feet and to tough it out. Well,

*I miss Luciana very much, and she will always be in my heart. I would like to share this poem that we have in our home that encourages us.*

### **I'M FREE**

*Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free  
I'm following the path GOD has laid,  
you see.*

*I took His hand when I heard Him call.  
I turned my back and left it all.*

*I could not stay another day,  
To laugh, to love, to work, or play.  
Tasks left undone must stay that way.  
I found that peace at the close of the day.*

*If my parting has left a void,  
Then fill it with remembered joys.  
A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss,  
Oh yes, these things I too will miss,*

*Be not burdened with times of sorrow.  
I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow.  
My life's been full, I savored much.  
Good friends, good times, a loved one's touch.*

*Perhaps my time seemed all too brief  
Don't lengthen it now with undue grief.  
Lift up your hearts and peace to thee.  
GOD wanted me now; He set me free.*

Luciana's symbols are angels.



Rev. Jerry and Martha Norsworthy's daughter and son-in-law, Carol and Bryan Luffinan, were killed in a van accident, 12-22-93. Martha described what spring means to her:

*I hope that you are having a good spring. I have enjoyed the spring flowers. I have such good memories of Carol and her love of spring flowers. She always picked a daffodil for me. As a small child she would pick one of the neighbor's flowers without asking so we would have to go tell them what she did. In the spring of 1993 she picked a daffodil outside the building where I work at Murray State and brought it to me. She asked me who we should go apologize to jar her picking the flower. This spring there was one daffodil that the frost and snow did not kill. This was a very special flower to me. I thought happy thoughts every*

*morning as I entered the building, I know you have these special thoughts that help you make it through each day.*

Carol's symbols are a rainbow and buttercup. Bryan's symbols are a deer and roses, and the symbols for both of them are a heart with hands.



Michael, the 23-year-old son of Dick and Jean Sand, was killed in an automobile accident 6-18-94. Jean described a bitter-sweet day:

*On May 4, 1996, in Michael's honor, we had a beautiful wedding reception at our home. It was Michael's bestfriend, Matt Heselbarth. Everything went off without a hitch, except for the weather, and the beautiful week we had a couple of weeks ago left us, and we had rain instead. But after dealing with the loss of Michael, things like the weather do not seem so important as it used to. We knew this part of the day would be up to God, with Michael at His side, so we turned it over to them. It was a very sad day for our family, on one hand, because we would never see this day for Michael, but on the other hand, it was a beautiful day for Matthew and Deanna, and for this we were thankful, and so glad we could be a part of it. I used angels as a theme.*

*We are sorry, but we are unable to come to the picnic on June 8th, but it sounds like a wonderful idea. I suppose just being with people that are walking in our shoes is a comfort.*

The Sands enclosed this challenging poem:

### **Possibilities**

*The more faith you have,  
The more you believe,  
The more goals you set,  
The more you'll achieve.*

*So, reach for the stars,  
Pick a mountain to climb,  
Dare to think big,  
But give yourself time.*

*Remember no matter  
How futile things seem,*

*With faith, there is no  
Impossible dream'*

-Alice Joyce Davidson



Michael's symbols are a star, an angel, a Stetson and boots.

To again quote Charlie Walton:

*Every hug helps to dilute the pain... to move the mountain. Don't be selfish with your mountain. Don't be a martyr about your grief There is plenty of mountain to keep you busy for the rest of your life... and.. if your friends hadn't been willing to help... they wouldn't have showed up with those spoons and shovels and hugs.*

Charlie's book is the best book I have read that explains a Father's viewpoint. I hope each of you will get this book and share it with others. It has made a difference in my understanding of a male's grief and I know it will help you also. To purchase the book, you can have your favorite bookstore order it, or you may contact the publisher:

Pathfinding Publishing 458 Dorothy Avenue Ventura, CA 93003 805-642-9278



I send this picture of a cherub with a wheelbarrow which represents a promise that if you come to J.I.M.'s **Picnic**, you will receive enough hugs to remove a wheelbarrow of grief.

I have always envisioned Heaven as a very special place where I would be happy for eternity. I knew I would be with Young Jim, and now, Beverly Donan has given me another reason to look forward to heaven:

**In Heaven,  
Chocolate has no  
calories and is  
served as the  
main course.**

