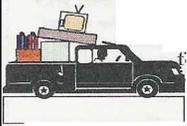


LAMENTATIONS

Issue 47

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

August, 1996



Each year, Jim and I look forward to August since it is the beginning of a new school year at Cumberland College. It is so stimulating to watch Freshmen as they come together for the first time, not realizing that this is the beginning of a new and exciting stage of their lives. Their innocence and enthusiasm are so refreshing and so contagious. They are just beginning their "adult" life and are full of dreams.

Since Young Jim's death, we no longer have a child here on earth, but we are so lucky to have these surrogate young people who bring so much joy into our lives. If you have lost your only child, I suggest you "adopt" a college student. They give you hope for the future.

August is also the month which stabs us once again with the reality that our children who have died will not have that same exciting experience of beginning or returning to school. We no longer have the joy of seeing their faces light up as they see their classmates once again. However, I often wonder what joyful expressions they must have had when they reached Heaven and were greeted by all our many angels.

As your surviving adolescents begin a new school year, may these suggestions from Dr. Savine Weizman and Phyllis Kamm's book, *About Mourning*, help them in their future relationships:

An adolescent's inability or unwillingness to form close or lasting relationships may be due to the fear of losing someone important again. Although no one can replace another person, there is room in everyone's life for other relationships. Children can continue activities once shared with the deceased or they can try new things. It is a chance to talk about it because it stirs up feelings about the deceased and the way in which life changed

In an article dated 10-24-95, Barbara Isaacs, a staff writer for the Lexington Herald-Leader, wrote an article entitled **Coping with a loved one's death. Teens differ in handling their grief.** Ms. Isaacs' article had several enlightening statements which can help grieving teenagers:

In giving support to a teenager you need to consider the individual teenager and the circumstances surrounding the death. Most teens say that they might or might not want people around them, but they want to feel free to talk when they want to. They don't want to feel pressured to talk if they're not ready.

For teens, grief can be especially daunting. Unlike adults, most often teens have little or no experience in dealing with death. That's one of the reasons teens experience grief differently from adults or children. Teens want to express their grief in creative ways such as writing poetry, listening to music, painting or drawing or writing letters expressing their feelings to the person that has died

Often grief can spark other problems such as depression or alcohol or drug abuse. Karen Carroll was quoted,

"Teens are very vulnerable to drug and alcohol use during this time. People

can't deal with their feelings if they're not feeling them."

Whether the death comes as a surprise or follows a long-term or terminal illness, teens say they feel a mixture of sadness, confusion and anger.

Ms. Whitney Clay, an expressive therapist for Hospice of the Bluegrass explained: When someone important to a teen dies, it threatens their security. It can be harder because teens are in the process of defining who they are and where they fit into their families and communities. The death of a loved one can shake up their view of the world

Ms. Clay said teens often react in two ways: They become extremely committed to the values of the person who died, or they might experience a big sense of apathy.



Teenagers look at death somewhat differently from younger adolescents. Debbi Dickinson reviewed Earl Grolhnan's book *Straight Talk About Death for Teenagers*, and gave the following summation:

With death, the teen may experience:

- * loss of security (Now what will happen to him?)
- * loss of faith (How could God let this happen?)
- * loss of opportunity (there's more they could have done together)
- * loss of dreams (life will never be the same)
- * loss of identity (He thought he was starting to know himself. Now he has more doubts than ever.)
- * loss of purpose (the road ahead is uncertain).

Though teens experience death in different ways, there are some common



landmarks along the journey of grief. Let the teen know that there is nothing wrong with him if he has some, of the following feelings...or if he doesn't, (Numbness, disbelief, anger, relief, jealousy, guilt, depression, confusion, etc) He needs to give himself permission to feel the way he is feeling. Feelings keep changing. Sometimes he may not even know what he feels.

Anger:

In physical symptoms

* tiredness, headaches, digestive problems, etc.

In feeling out of control

* lashing out at the world or at yourself

In loss of friends

* withdrawing that creates emotional distance

Pain is there. You can't wish it away. To deny the anger is to deny the possibility of healing.

Suggest to the teen to try to take a break by:

- * going for a walk
- * screaming in private places, like in the shower or in the woods
- * jogging
- * listening to favorite music
- * writing about their feelings
- * whatever brings some relief

When you face the past and let it go, you give the present the chance it deserves.

All of the family must come to grips with the change in your lives. All of you need to recover. Dare to talk openly, even cry together. When words fail, hold each other. You need each other more now than ever before.

Healing happens as you allow feelings to happen.

Time doesn't completely heal a broken heart, it only teaches you how to live with it.

There are no magic formulas to remove suffering. Avoiding pain is not an option. The question is how will you manage the pain for that day.

Acceptance doesn't mean you have to like what happened. Instead, it is the awareness that life has changed and that you must now respond to these new circumstances.

Respect your feelings. Don't carry your grief in silence. Allow yourself to

mourn and to grieve for what was and what could have been.

To go on is to admit that you can't change the reality of your loved one's death. To go on is not to live a pain free life, but to take each day as it comes and make the most out of it. To go on means to survive and celebrate your loved one's life,

The life that has touched yours goes on forever. Love doesn't die; people do. To love others doesn't diminish your love for the one who died.

Grollman offers open-ended statements that a teenager can complete that may be enlightening to him:

1. When I hear your name mentioned, I
2. The last thing I remember I did with you was
3. Since your death, my life
4. I always wanted to ask you
5. I miss
6. I wish I had
7. I wish you had
8. My friends don't understand that
9. I'm furious that
10. If only
11. It's a relief that
12. I find it hard to forgive
13. My greatest surprise since you died is
14. What scares me the most is
15. When I think of you, I don't miss
16. If you were living now
17. What I now understand about my self is
18. I have changed and grown by
19. I wish that you
20. What I want most is
21. Wonderful recollections I'll never forget are

Doris Sanford, *Helping Kids Cope With Grief*, gave excellent suggestions for DO's and DON'T's in supporting your child as he grieves:

DO'S

- . Tell the truth ("I don't know" is an OK answer to "WHY" questions),
- * Maintain structure, rules, limits. It provides security.
- * Touch, hold, hug.
- * Save special items from the deceased person to give the child later (a collection, a Bible, sweat shirt, etc).
- * Talk about loss and death.

* Be a good role model. Cry in front of the child. Tell them how much you miss the child you have lost.

. Tell the child that he did not cause the death by his angry thoughts.

* Tell the child who will care for him if you die. Help them feel as secure as possible,

* Recognize that children express grief physically. They "flush out the wound" by beating, pounding, running it out.

* Allow children to select the play activities they need to work through their grief

* Talk about heaven. Use Scripture to describe it.

* Let the child "talk" about his feelings through drawings.

* Give the child something to do. It will combat his helplessness, i.e. plant a memory tree, write a story, take flowers to the grave.

* Read children's books which deal with loss so the child knows his feelings are' normal.



* Use 3rd person language in talking to children. It is less threatening. Say, "Many children feel," instead of "Do YOU feel? "

* Look through photo albums at pictures of the deceased with the child.

* Talk about the loss whenever the child brings up the subject.

* Answer only what is asked. Let the child be in charge of what he is ready to hear.

* Expect children to regress somewhat, i.e. to cling, be afraid. Rocking and night lights help.

* Tell the child the exact cause of death.

DON'T's:

* Don't underestimate the child's grief

* Don't associate tears with grief. Some children cry, some don't. Both may be equally affected.

* Don't try to protect the child from feelings of pain and loss.

* Don't assume the child will respond to the loss as you have.

* Don't worry about saying the "right word."

* You can't hide feelings from children, no matter what you say.

* Don't find something "good" about death, i.e. "Aren't you glad Mommy doesn't hurt any more?" "Isn't it

wonderful that God's love was shared at the funeral? "

* Don't be afraid of losing control or crying in front of the child. Tears give the child permission to be real too.

* Don't shut the child out by sending him to the babysitter. Include him in the family sadness.

* Don't be overly simplistic about death, i.e. don't put all the focus on heaven and none on the feelings of loss.

* Don't replace a dead pet immediately. Let the child grieve.

* Don't say, "Now you're the man of the house."

* Don't allow the child to assume the role of emotional caregiver to the parents.

* Don't worry about the child's poor appetite. Give plenty of drinks.

* Don't tell the child he will feel better in time. "Time heals all wounds" is a lie. Some wounds get infected

* Don't use abstract language to "soften" the death. Children are concrete thinkers. Instead of saying that the sibling has "passed away," say, "Jim died."

* Don't promise YOU won't die. You can say, "I think I will live until I'm very, very old, but no one knows for sure. "

* Don't be afraid to initiate talking about the death. Mention the person's name who died, i.e. "I know your brother died and I'm sure you miss him very much."

* Don't assume a child will always want to talk about the death. Children can only handle "bits and pieces" of grief at a time.

* In a church or school setting, don't single out a grieving child for special privileges. He needs to feel he is treated as his peers.

Darcie Sims' book, **Helping Kids Cope With Grief**, provides several helpful hints:

+ Be available.

+ TOUCH (often says "I know what happened and I care. I am here if you need me")

+ Be open and honest with your feelings. Create an atmosphere of open acceptance that invites questions and fosters confidence and love.

+ Provide appropriate places to express grief

+ Acknowledge the reality that grief HURTS! Do not attempt to rescue the child (or yourself) from hurt. Work through the pain

+ Understand that priorities change. What you think is important may NOT be considered by your child as such.

+ As with you, grief causes difficulty in concentrating. Children often experience a shortened attention span. School work is often affected

+ Temper your expectations with kindness and understanding. Continue to expect function

+ Help your child to find a supportive peer group.

+ Help your child's friends learn how to be supportive.

+ Maintain a familiar daily routine if at all possible. Continuity becomes a safety net for the entire family.

+ Have resources available about grief, loss, and change.

An article from the September, 1995 magazine, **HOPE FOR BEREAVED**, stressed:

Children's emotional responses are complex and change as the child develops. Up to approximately 7 years of age, death seems a separation and thus a threat of abandonment. Children may "cling" or need a lot of time and contact after a sibling dies. As a way of assuring that the parents are still there, children may regress to earlier patterns of behavior and need and thus demand the kind of interaction with parents the children had when life seemed more secure.

Between 7 and 12 years of age, death is a personified eternal threat which may happen to them also. Mass media often operates at this developmental level, i.e. the Terminator or Freddie Kruger. To overcome death, one has to be good, noble, brave, and in touch with a higher power. But at night in the dark with shadows on the wall or noises under the bed, personifications of death can be very frightening

Teenagers respond to death very much like adults, though because they are in a stage of finding their own selfhood and thus have in the depth of their being a sense of themselves alone

(hence the need to herd together and be like everyone else), death presents particular existential threats. One choice may be to adopt a religious faith which promises to overcome external death. Another choice may be to engage in death-defying behavior, either legal (bungee jumping) or illegal (driving drunk).

There are some mistakes bereaved parents can make as they deal with their surviving children. First, it is not the job of the surviving or subsequent child to live the life we had hoped for the dead child. Each child deserves to live a life of their own, and not have to live out the unfulfilled promise of a dead child. There is good research showing that "replacement children" suffer more than their share of emotional disturbance as adults.

Second, children deserve their own grief, not ours. We have lost a child, a part of us, the hope of our immortality and future, a child we chose to have and whom we had promised our full care and protection. The other children in the family grieve as siblings, not as parents. Together we can say we miss the dead child, but they have a right to find the joys in their aliveness and to go on with life when they are ready, even though we may not be ready to go on ourselves.

Third, children have a right to be judged in their own terms, not against the standard of an idealized dead child. Perhaps, besides including them and letting them have their own life and grief, we help our surviving and subsequent children best by trusting them. It is sad to say, but often the death of one child makes us less good parents to our other children. In our grief we are short on patience, long on anger, and too often, distracted. D. W. Winnicott, one of the giants of psychological theory, said children do not need perfect parenting, rather they need "good enough" parenting. We need to trust that what we gave them before the death, and what we will give them after we have resolved our grief, and what we are giving them now as we confront this most difficult reality is "good enough." The life we are living now is the heritage we are giving our children. By sharing with them as we find our resolutions, it can be a good heritage.

Grief Grafts

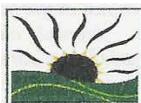
Eric Davis, the 15-year-old son of William and Anita McCarty, died from a gunshot, 10-10-93. Anita lamented:

Everything here is getting better. Fuzzy was hurt and lost his left eye while building a fence last September and then I got sick.

But things are better. I'm working now and maybe that will help me stay busy.

I still have trouble. I know I always will, but if I stay busy, it's not as hard. I finally cleaned Eric's room and now Stacey stays there a lot. She won't talk, but maybe being in Eric's room will help her.

The family has chosen the sun and water to symbolize Eric.



Shelby, the 18-year-old son of Jaybo and Rowena Warner, died due to complications from Hodgkin's Disease, 10-28-92. Theresa Noe, his sister, wrote:

The month of October is really hard, since it's the month of Shelby's death. It's also rough for me. The closer the time gets, the more I think about what happened during the whole month of October (prior to his death). The changes that took place in Shelby's life as well as ours. In Lamentations, you wrote about siblings, how death affects them. Deep in my heart, I feel like Shelby was my child. We were together from his birth until his death. I was 15 when he was born. Mom was really sick for a couple of weeks after they came home with blood pressure and sugar problems. I had to take on the responsibility of helping Daddy with Shelby.

I slept with him the first night he came home from the hospital and every night until I was married. He was 6 years old. We had him everyday we were off (from school) and on weekends. I would miss him so much when he'd go home on Sunday night. He was a shy little fellow, so I took him to school his first day and I took him the last day. I started to work at his school when he

was a freshman. I went and got him every morning, stopped and got his breakfast and then to school we'd go.

We hardly ever separated for very long. We shopped together. He loved to shop, but I really miss him. He thought when Andrea was born that my feelings for him would change. Once he saw that wasn't true, I think we only grew closer.

We are very fortunate. Everywhere you turn in our school, our church or our town, there's apart of him. A piece of his art work, a sign he painted, something with his name on it. His name lives on in our school and community every day.

Even though it has been this long, it seems like just yesterday and it's all fresh again. It's seems that every day something happens to remind me of him. I saw an article in the Herald Leader about the Ronald McDonald House. That brought back a lot of memories. Thank God for those. We stayed 4 weeks there. That was the most rewarding experience I think that I've ever had. Just to be able to give back a little of what they gave to us is such a reward.

Shelby's symbols are an artist's pallet and a rose.



Ray and Sue Hutcheson's 20-year-old daughter, Leslie, was killed in an automobile accident, 2-21-93. Last August Sue wrote:

Can you believe it's school time again and another year has passed? Isn't it funny--some days seem to last forever and then a year is gone in a flash? Is this a part of our grief or is it just "old age"? Maybe a combination of the two.

After Leslie's death, the Hutchesons and we found out that our children had a mutual friend, Jay Stancil. Jay went to the same high school as Young Jim. He wrote the following poem:

Graduation Day

*Here we are standing in line.
Probably the last time we're all together.*

We make promises to one another, But how can we say that it will last forever. We've done many things, traveled many a mile,

We've shed a few tears, and shared many a smile.

And after all we've been through, I will always call you my friend, Even if we never see each other, I'll always love you until the End

There's something I must say before we go our separate ways

Even though we may be miles and miles Apart

I'll always cherish our friendship And your memory will live on forever in my heart.

--Jay Stancil

(written 5-19-91)

Dedicated to Jim Taylor

(died 5-20-91)

& Leslie Hutcheson

(died 2-21-93)

Leslie's symbols are a smile and a bear and I am adding a lady bug since Ray has a ladybug tattoo on his arm in memory of Leslie.



Kim, the 27-year old daughter of Jerry Stricker and Nona Stricker, took her own life, 10-27-94. Nona shared:

This year has been especially hectic with my work (Executive Director of the Literacy Network of Greater Cincinnati). It seems that what energy I have left is largely spent helping my two surviving children with their journey of grief. It has been so hard on them to deal with such trauma so young in life. Thank God I have them'

Nona shared the following poem:

I'm Not Here

Don't stand by my grave and weep
For I'm not there, I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow
I am the diamonds glint on snow
I am the sunlight on ripened grain
I am the gentle autumn's rain.

When you awaken in morning's hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circle flight

I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand by my grave and cry
I am not there, I did not die.

My Kimmy purchased a copy at a Native American exhibit about six months before she died and brought it home to show me. It took on new significance after her death.

*I attended a national suicide awareness program in Washington in May. It is a cooperative, community-based, grassroots effort, undertaken **By** survivors of suicide **For** survivors. Its purpose is to reduce the incidence of suicide through advocacy and awareness, because survivors **CAN** do something to help prevent other suicides.*

SPAN (Suicide Prevention Advocacy Network)
(770) 998-8819 or
Fax (770) 642-1419



Kim's symbol is an angel.

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

I have a story about Kristy's (10) grief. About two months ago she handed me a piece of paper that she had neatly folded. I unfolded the letter. I melted. Kristy wrote:

My Little Angel

Once there was a little angel named Jennifer. She is my little sister. She was killed in a car wreck. I was very sad. I cried a lot. I wish she was alive. I think about her all the time. I miss her. I love her so much. My mom says that I'm her little angel and Jennifer too.

I believe Little Jennifer is often on her mind. Kristy often asks "I wonder what Little Jennifer is doing" or she asks me what she may be having for supper. At the beginning of softball season, Kristy said she wished Little Jennifer was here because she knew she'd like to play too.



An angel and a white rose are Jennifer's symbols.

Candy, the 14-year-old daughter of Sammy and Sheila Hall was killed with Clint Sturgill by a drunk driver 4-25-92. The following was dedicated in Candy's memory:

Clint and Candy influenced our lives in more ways than one. Clint will always be remembered for his comical personality and Candy will always be remembered for her sweet personality, beautiful smile and cute dimples. They touched the lives and hearts of everyone they met. Even though they are gone, they will be in our hearts and memories for a life time.

April 25, 1992, had a major impact on all of our lives. During our freshman year, a tragedy took Candace Brooke Hall from us. Had it not been for a drunk driver, Candy would be graduating from high school with the Class of 1995.

Nothing can fill the void she left; however, we want to dedicate the 1995 yearbook in her memory.

Sheila wrote the following explanation for Candy's symbol:

Candy's symbol is a dimple-cheeked angel holding a 4-leaf clover with one missing leaf. The clover represents our family which was lucky and whole when we were all together as four equal parts. We were cut to three when one of our parts was ripped away by the careless nature of man. We were left behind, severed, unlucky and incomplete. We anxiously await the day when God will reunite us to our missing member and make us whole again. The angel represents Candy,



our missing part... When I look at this symbol, I can see that all 4 parts are still together, but separated .One of them is in Heaven with God

Scott, the 17-year-old son of Howard and Sandy Graham, took his own life. Sandy wanted to share some of her problems and concerns:

I am writing because our son Shane, is having a very difficult time dealing with his brother's death. I thought if we shared some of our problems that another traveler may have dealt with

this and could help or what we have, been through might help someone else.

Shane was 14 years and 8 months old, when his brother, Scott, died on April 28, 1992. We have always been a close family and shared everything. Our children could share their feelings in our home and know it was OK to do so.

Shane shut down after Scott's death He wouldn't or couldn't tell us how he felt and as days and weeks passed Shane seemed to be getting distant. We wanted to hold Shane, allowing him to cry, talk and share, but he wouldn't do it.

We saw a Psychologist very shortly after Scott's death. Shane wouldn't talk. and said he didn't want to have treatment. The Psychologist told us that children and young adults grieve differently than adults. How differently we didn't know and I know his word didn't sink in. I was still in shock.

I began looking for reading material to understand grief and to see what could find on how young adults grieve I couldn't find much of anything. just the statement that children grieve differently than adults.

My husband and I got ourselves into therapy to try and deal with Shane's behavior and try to deal with Scott's death. Shane refused to go and participate. His behavior showed us that he needed help and we tried everything we knew and everything that was suggested to us by professionals. Nothing was helping. The one thing we heard from everyone was, "He needs to hit rock bottom and want to get help before anyone can help him. "

We have learned over this past year that Shane's hurt and pain was inside and he didn't want to deal with it so he turned that SAD into BAD. He started doing things that wasn't Shane at all ditching classes, working very hard a getting low grades, smoking, running away and being violent with us. We know he has so much anger and he directs that anger at the two people who love him the most, and love him unconditionally, his parents.

I know that being in puberty at the time of his brother's death just com pounded things.

To make matters worse, Shane has had 7 other people die since his brother's death. None of these people

were family, but classmates, coworkers, teachers and friends. One of Shane's problems dealing with these deaths is that the school would publicly announce the funerals, allow students time out of school to attend the services and dedicate things to those dead students. Because our son's death was a suicide, the school wouldn't post or announce his memorial service, wouldn't allow some students out of school to attend his service, won't allow his name to be in print anywhere and some teachers will not let students talk about Scott in school. This is very hurtful for us too, making it hard to help Shane deal with it.

This past year, we have found that there aren't many resources to help children like Shane. There are professionals who deal with grief and death, but if your child will not open up and allow help, it does no good to drag him to weekly sessions. All the group homes, etc., are for children who have broken the law and are labeled as juvenile delinquents. We didn't want our hurting child in that type of environment. The few programs that may be available cost more per month than we even make.

To make a very long and painful journey short, we have found a private therapeutic foster home for Shane to live in so that he can get therapy every day and we are hoping to get back into family therapy so that Shane will live at home again with his parents who love him very much.

We feel as if we have lost both of our children. The grief is doubled and the pain, compounded.

Has anyone else out there experienced this and what did you find to help your child(ren) through the loss of their sibling?

The Graham's address is:
Howard and Sandy Graham
8800 W. Fremont Avenue
Littleton, CO 80127
303-979-0826

I hope you will contact them if you have experience this.

Scott's symbols are
a dolphin and an F-16.



Paula Atkins' 19-year-old son, Jeremy Hardin, died 9-5-94, from injuries sustained from falling from a bridge. Paula shared a very personal and comforting experience:

March 24 was Jeremy's 21st birthday. What a celebration there would have been if he were here! Instead, it was spent pretty quietly (at least to any onlooker--in my head there are nonstop conversations I have with him). Isn't it amazing how we are "hit harder" about our loss at these special times? It's not like I'm not aware that it's approaching and it's not like I miss him any less the other days of the year. But try as I may, WHAM--I'm just not prepared to deal with the loneliness and emptiness of not having Jeremy with me, especially on his birthday. I stopped at his high school and planted some pansies around the base of the memorial in his name, I visited the cemetery as I do most Sundays, and I looked through my treasure box of pictures to find the one of him blowing out his candles on his cake on his 17th birthday. His girlfriend called in the evening and we reminisced. Received a few cards from friends who remembered and some calls from family. I couldn't be with Nathan and Carrie as it was their weekend with their dad. I seemed absolutely driven to do more, but then I realized there just isn't anything within my power that can make it better. And before long, the day was gone.

I know, early on, I mentioned how we had experienced Jeremy's presence after his death. I've often started to write of them, but I never seemed to complete the thought. I've read several books since that time and have found it's not in the least unusual for people to experience the presence of their loved ones who have died.

For us, it started a day after Jeremy died. Nathan awoke to find an imprint of a "smiley face" on his pillowcase. The image was unusual in that it didn't appear to have been drawn but more like it was burned into the material.

There were marks of some kind also on the pillowcase which we couldn't make out. By chance, we passed a mirror and it was then clear--it read in big, bold letters "SMILE!"

Two days later, the piano was heard playing, but no one was in the house but me. I didn't hear a real tune being played, but more like someone running their fingers up and down the keyboard. What I heard was unmistakably the piano as there were no radios or TVs on. Jeremy's step dad (from whom I'm now divorced) later told me he had heard the piano playing while he was in the shower. Every time he would turn the shower off to hear better, the music would stop, just to resume again once the water started. Jeremy wasn't much of a piano player, but he had been teaching Carrie to play "Jolly Old St. Nicholas," and this was the tune Dave had kept hearing.

We had a mysterious sports jacket appear on the back porch the day of the funeral. After everyone had gone, the jacket was still there. I brought it in and hung it up on the back of the door in the spare bedroom thinking whomever it belonged to would eventually miss it and call. It hung there for two weeks and no one called about it and we couldn't recall anyone wearing it. For the first time, while trying to figure out who it belonged to, we looked at the size and it was Jeremy's size. Jeremy was only 5' 9" and 140 pounds, but he had such broad, strong shoulders that he wore a 44. The jacket remained hanging on the back of the door in the spare bedroom in the upstairs of the house. About a week later, when I was cleaning, I noticed the coat, hanger and all, was gone. None of us know what happened to it.

These were things that happened the first few weeks. Since that time, many more have happened although there hasn't been anything for quite a while now. I have shared our experiences with a few close friends. As a rule, my family (Mom, sisters and brother) are not very receptive and do their best to get me "off the subject." As a result, I stopped sharing with them after the above incidents occurred. They are just too uncomfortable with my mentioning Jeremy or anything about him. They have no idea how isolated they make me feel when they do this. As you know, we cannot live our lives without the inclusion of our sons and I don't intend to stop talking about Jeremy to ease their uncomfortableness.

She died when she was hit by a car,

Jeremy's symbols are a twinkling star and drama masks.



David and Cindy Jo Greever's 9-year-old daughter, Michelle, died 11-5-93. Cindy Jo penned:

I would love to share the following poem I wrote on the first anniversary following Michelle's Homegoing (her death.) I have revised it for her birthday. Michelle would have been 12 this August 24th. With my birthday the 27th, this is a particularly difficult time, but I know I will get through it with the help of God and friends.

*I would also like to recommend a very good book for parents who have lost a child, (several years into their grief work) it is called, **After The Death of A Child** by Ann K. Finkbeiner. It is excellent reading and has been most helpful to me! It just came out recently and is available at libraries and bookstores.*

**Michelle Marie Greever
August 24, 1984 - November 5, 1993**

On Her Twelfth Birthday

*The Lord loaned you to us
On that sunny August morn.
We knew you were His
But you were now ours to adorn.
You brought so much happiness
To our family and friends,
And even now as you are in Heaven
Our love for you never end,...
You are close in our hearts
Our souls and our minds,
And until our vapor
Has ended on earth,
We will await seeing you
And being with you for all of time..
So on this, your Birthday
As we reckon with your having gone
Home
We know, sweet Michelle,
That you are forever with us.
As to eternal life
You have been born!*

Michelle's Mother Shares

Michelle was born August 24, 1984. She was a healthy seven pound, four ounce baby. Right from the start, she was special. Weeks old she would kiss me for the first time. For several years

Michelle breastfed, though she started solids at one year, our bond was so special. Michelle blossomed into a very happy and loving child who lived to give and lighten each of our days. Michelle was a remarkable artist and singer and entertainer. She performed her first solo at age four at our church, where she was baptized at the age of 8. Little did we know then that sixteen months later she would be called "Home." She had an incredible love for nature and all its creatures, great and small. She was always creating and she decorating and played her keyboard like a professional, though she never had formal lessons, and loved to write her own songs. Michelle was friends with everyone and had no enemies, she didn't want disharmony for anyone. Michelle attended the Christian Awana Youth Program where she memorized Bible verses for six years. Two days before she went "Home" she recited John 10:28-29, (about eternal life). Michelle was chosen for select choir in fourth grade; the youngest in her choir. The day Michelle left for school for the last time, we said our "bird talk" of "love yous", "rove yous" and "wove yous" to one another for the last time as we never believed in saying "good-bye." She was my baby chicken, and I, her mother, the hen!! I had no idea that we wouldn't see each other again until we joined in Heaven, but it is NOT "good-bye" it is "see you in a blink" because we have eternal life!! Many signs have been received by me that Michelle is all right, and I know she wants me to go on with my life as does God. If I were rendered deaf, blind and without touch and Michelle were still here in the flesh, it would be no different than her being in Heaven now and not being able to see, touch or hear her voice. She lives in my heart, soul and mind forever!!

Michelle's sister Melissa Mae shares the following poem she wrote at the age of 12. This was written several months after Michelle's death:

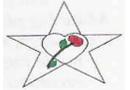
*Michelle is a person of love
Michelle is a gift from above...
She was born on this earth nine years ago,
And God took her with no pain, no
tears, sweet and mellow.*

*She died when she was hit by a car,
She was saying, "Don't cry, don't be
sad,*

*Please be happy for now I am glad!
I'm living in a place of gold and
pearly gates
And clouds with big rainbows!
I am happy and you should be too.
God loves me and God loves you!"*

*Melissa Mae Greever-only sister of
Michelle, January 1994*

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



Ryan Young, the 14-year-old son of John and Gene Nocht, died as the result of a seizure, 7-11-94. Gene has been very active in keeping Ryan's memory alive. May 16, 1995, she spoke before the Labor and Human Resources Senate Committee in Washington, DC. This is a copy of her speech:

Distinguished Senators and Honored Panel:

I feel very special to be here today to discuss how federal legislation impacted my very special son, Ryan. Before I highlight the positive and at times surprising outcomes of Individualized Educational Planning and including ALL kids in school accountability, I would like to reflect on why I am here. I can remember in 1979 sitting in a small parent group session at the Kennedy Center, Nashville, TN., Vanderbilt University learning about PL 94-142 (the Education Act for ALL children). I remember being the only parent totally amazed that there had to be a federal mandate for my son, only a few months old at the time, to have the opportunity to attend school with the same rights my daughter, Tina, was receiving. Looking back, I was not only amazed, I was simply a disruptive parent at that support meeting because I kept asking WHY? Why did parents and their child with handicaps need this law? So from that perspective I guess it's no surprise why I am here.

Then over the years I learned about Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). I attended those meetings, because I knew from my Kennedy Center Training that I was, as Ryan's mom, and advocate, one of the architects of Ryan's life. What I said and agreed to at these meetings would be, so I approached it in this philosophical and piecemeal way:

*"Make no little plans.
They have no magic to stir
men's blood and probably themselves
will not be realized.
Make big plans, aim high in hope
and work, remembering that a
noble logical diagram once
recorded will never die, but
long after we're gone will be a
living thing asserting itself
with ever-growing insistency."*

Daniel Burnham 1907

At the IEP meeting, I was asking a group of professional people to think about educational outcomes for ALL children.. even for those who didn't fit in their BOXES and TRACKS.

I was constantly challenging a group of people to examine their own value system and mission effectiveness and to explore alternative ways to define and to measure progress. Kentucky is now a state recognized for its accountability measures for ALL children thanks to the efforts of the Kentucky Systems Change Project for Students with Severe Disabilities and the Kentucky Department of Education

As I look back over Ryan's 14 years in the school system, I realize the school was his life. That's where he met friends and had many educational, social and community opportunities to grow and develop. He was a pioneer in integrating people with severe disabilities into regular classroom activities with real educational outcomes" accountability. His education portfolio of accomplishments, used as a part of his school's accountability, was proof that people, even bureaucrats, can be creative and sensitive in developing learning opportunities that yield positive outcomes for ALL children. For example, Ryan's Portfolio highlighted some of the following:

* His ability to shop at Krogers... select food... push cart... place food on counter and pay check-out person. (If

you don't think this is an accomplishment, you should have tried shopping with us.)

* His ability to participate in regular PE class meaningfully. Not only did he "blend in" but his non-handicapped peers thought of ways to include him spontaneously. By the way, did you hear the word friend? Yes, Ryan actually had friends as a result of more sensitive and creative educational planning, an integral component of the accountability process.

* His ability to perform more and more self-help skills (eating, carrying trays, washing clothes, especially the uniforms for football and girl's basketball). Ryan did not eat in a special section or place in the school. He was with his "circle of friends," his "peer tutors"... he had role models... most of all, he had the opportunity to experience the gift of other children... other children who would model "normal" kid behavior. Ryan smiled... he grew, but more importantly, his regular teachers began to see him grow so they grew with him. They began to think of ways to INCLUDE Ryan and not in the old way of thinking of ways and reasons to EXCLUDE him.

What's even more exciting, I was fortunate enough to see Ryan's IEP not only impact his life, but it also impacted his classmates--both his non handicapped peers and his classmates with handicaps. Ryan died this summer, but his legacy lives in a small town in Kentucky. His teachers have called me and told me how they have used Ryan's portfolio to model IEPs for other children which has been a comfort to me. It makes me think maybe I wasn't a disruptive parent after all.

Perhaps Ryan and I were just what the school system needed. We were motivators (with a little help from federal legislation), change agents, risk takers, and pioneers in promoting opportunities for ALL children in the school system.

Thank you for allowing me to talk about my favorite person, Ryan, and about his favorite thing, school.

Ryan's symbols are a heart, star and water.



The following excerpt is from Nicholas Wolterstorff's book, *Lament for a Son*:

And now he's gone. That future which I embraced to myself has been destroyed. He slipped out of my arms. For 25 years I guarded and sustained and encouraged him with these hands of mine, helping him to grow and become a man of his own. Then he slipped out and was smashed

Was HE special? Did I love him more--more than his sister and brothers? When they see my tears, do they think I loved him more?

I visualize the appallingly cruel choice with which Hitler's, henchmen faced Jewish parents: "Select one of your children for salvation or let all perish." What would I have done? If a parent loved one of her children more, she would pick that one--or would she avoid picking that one, out of blended love and guilt?

I think I would have been immobilized. I love them equally though differently. None is special; or rather, each is special. Each has an. escape in which I delight. I celebrate them all and love them each.

Death has picked him out, not love. Death has made him special. He is special in my grieving. When I give thanks, I mention all five; when I lament, I mention only him. Wounded love is special love, special in its wound. Now I think of him every day; before, I did not. Of the five, only he has a grave.

I hope this month's newsletter has helped you better understand your surviving children. I know it is hard to believe, but you are so blessed to have them--give them a hug from me. I would appreciate comments on whether the material which was included helped in any way.

Children are nature's diet aid. Once you've had kids, your chances of finishing a candy bar are pretty slim.

