

LAMENTATIONS

Issue 54

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

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In preparing to write this month's newsletter, I have researched most of the books on grief in my library, and am astonished to find that there is nothing pertaining to anyone else's grief except that of the immediate family. It is as if anyone else's grief is invalid. Why is this? You, as I, have seen the devastation of a child's death to other family members. As is true in my own loss, our family members not only grieve for their loss, but also ours. In many situations, these "forgotten grievers" are trying to be so helpful to us in our grief, that they don't realize how important it is to personally grieve.

Many fellow travelers have written that their family members have become distant and will not talk about their loved one. Many times this is the result of their own grief and has nothing to do with our grief. Perhaps they fear that if they tell you how broken hearted they really are, you will think they are trying to diminish your grief. You know how you grieve not only for yourself, but also your other children and spouse. They have these same feelings. It must be very frustrating to see the intensity of our suffering and be unable to relieve any of the intensity of our grief. That has to be an extra burden in addition to their trying to deal with their loss.

Jim and I are blessed by a wonderful family who accept our grief and allow us to voice our frustrations, anger, and heartbreak and they also "celebrate" Young Jim's life by sharing memories.

My sister, Elaine Perkins (many of you have met her at **J.I.M.**'s picnics), is a Nurse Therapist. Elaine gave the following suggestions for your extended family to consider:

1. View your loss from a personal basis. *Define and understand the extent of your loss of love, friendship comradeship, etc. of the deceased. Be realistic in predictions and expectations of the deceased, e.g. Jim may never have been president of the U.S., there may have been disappointments-human frailties. Don't minimize your loss by comparing it to others.*

2. Start backwards from a "Me First" system. *"I have a great loss," e.g. my nephew. I no longer have the unique relationship between aunt and nephew. I have had to give up part of my future. e.g. someone to love, someone to be proud of someone to brag about. I feel guilty about having children and grandchildren and my sister having none.*

3. Seek help from grieving parents. They (grieving parents) know what they want and need. *Ask them how they have successfully grieved. Ask them "acceptable" words or phrases that they use to describe their loss, e.g. "suicide," "killed" "lost," etc. Establish a mutual terminology with all the family members.*

4. Incorporate your grief with the other family members. *Understand and accept how each family member views their individual loss. It is important to understand that just because someone is not outwardly grieving, or not talking about their loss, it does not mean that they do not have intense grief. Help other family members to*

understand the extent and depth of your loss. It will help them to understand more fully, how loved and cherished they are also.

5. Provide continued and reliable support for the grieving parents. Always be available. *Talk with them openly about their wants and needs, e.g. they may want to be alone, or share memories, special days such as birthdays, Christmas, etc. Give them a "sense of family." Include them in family activities and do not be offended if they choose not to participate. Sometimes it may be too difficult for them. When they do attend, mention their child's name and encourage others to share their memories. Develop ways to remember the deceased Use the child's symbol or burn a candle.*

6. Love them unconditionally and accept their "strangeness." *They no more understand their mood swings, crying "spells" or reactions than you.*

If you are feeling isolated because of the way you "perceive" your extended family's reactions, talk with them. Perhaps you have read something in a book or in this newsletter, that you wish your family members would read, say or do. . . Share this with them. You may find that they have been "distant" because they didn't know what to say or do. I honestly believe that if we give them "permission" to grieve with us, they will become more understanding and feel closer to us. Remember that this "grief process" is as new and foreign to them as it is to us. Since we are becoming the "experts" let's share our expertise with those we love the most.

Grief Grafts

As you can tell after reading the next several pages, we are more than blessed by having such a loving, supportive family. Our family has always been open in sharing everything, and this has been the secret to the support we have received from them since Young Jim's death. We told them what we needed, and they have given, and continue to give. Challenge your family to give you the support and acceptance you need. You will be happily surprised by what will happen if you speak openly and honestly with them.

Elaine described her own grief:

Tertiary Grief- When do we start:

(Tertiary is defined as third in place, order, degree, or rank)

After visiting my nephew's grave, I was reminded again of how utterly sad I get when I pass the place (morning and evening) where he was killed. There are always memories (multitudes of memories) about my birthday present (Jim was born on Elaine's birthday).

My grieving is always orderly. First for my sister and brother-in-law, next for my son and nephew and then for myself. The problem is, I can never find the energy to grieve in a more productive way because I run out of quality grieving time before I get to myself. As a nurse therapist, I see this tertiary grieving frequently. We grieve for our deceased loved ones, but we can't immerse ourselves in the grieving process because we have to grieve by a "priority system," e.g. the ones we love the most and the ones who have lost the most.

How do we, then, grieve directly and proportionately with our loss? First, I believe that we must focus on his (her) life in relation to our own. We must by-pass all others' grief and keep our own loss "on task." This is not easy, I did not think it would be, because I know about grief. What I don't know is how to personally grieve therapeutically. It is important that my family understand the extent of my loss and, in

return, I understand theirs. Talking and keeping an open line of communication is vital.

I have seen my sister grieve progressively and marvel at her strength and tenacity.

As a nurse therapist, I understand patient's grief. I do not understand why I cannot apply it to my own life. The energy that I have is used in grieving for my sister and brother-in-law. It is heart-breaking. "Why do I have two children and my sister none?" It is not fair. She was the wonderful mother, not I.

Those of you who know Dinah understand how caring and loving she is. I want you to know how wonderful she is to my children and grandchildren. You will never detect that she will not have her own children because she has grieved and continues to grieve therapeutically - every day - all the time. She understands the process. She works at it everyday. She does not let it consume her. There is no hatred or blame, no "poor, pitiful me." Young Jim would have been so proud of his mother.

Both Dinah and Jim are caring and available to all family members. When they are out of town, we are all "out of sorts." It is a joyful event when they return. The "greats," as Dinah calls them (my grandchildren) cannot go past her home without wanting to stop in for candy (chocolate) and a dose of Aunt Granny's generous love and affection.

Each of you reading this has felt her loving strength and friendship, her love and compassion, her straight forward approach to grieving. Are we lucky or what? Do any of us eat chocolate without thinking of her?

Elaine shared a few of her memories of Young Jim and a poem:

Jim, my birthday present! So planned, so wanted, so loved by all of us. He had a "sense of family" like no other child I have ever seen. I never telephoned their home that he didn't say, "When are you coming over?" or "Come over and eat with us." He loved company of all ages.

Like his parents, he could never "give" you enough or "do" enough for you.

My fondest memories are of his laughter. He loved a joke; particularly if it was on his mother. He could mock her perfectly. He would laugh, uncontrollably, at my son (Wayne) whom he adored and the feeling was mutual. They entertained each other for hours. Both of them loved horses and competitive horse-related activities.

One day I asked Jim what he was going to be when he grew up. He said that he was going to be a lawyer, but that he would "get over" that and go live on the farm with Wayne.

At birthdays, Christmas, etc., Dinah would insist that he save his money. So everyone would give him money in his card (which Dinah would save for him) and then slip him money that he could spend. We all delighted in being able to keep this from Dinah until after Jim's death.

The best times: July 4 picnic with egg tosses (egg fights), water balloon fights; being together for all holidays.

My Nephew

*Full of laughter, full of fun
Sweetest kind under the sun.*

*Born on my birthday -What a gift!
Loved his family with never a rift.*

*Cared for others - what a joy
All of us loved that young boy!*

*Sometimes mischievous - mostly good
Ran the whole gammet of what a child should*

*We miss you so badly, everyday
All of us love you in every way.*

*Some day we'll see you, or what's
Heaven for?
Perhaps we can laugh again and then
laugh some more.*

Elaine's son, Wayne, has enlightened and challenged me to find the **middle**.

I am a horse trainer, the job description also includes training the owners to ride the horses we train. Whether we're teaching the horses or the riders, the goal is to find the middle. The middle is a feel not a place when it comes to the equestrian sports. It means not overreacting or under reacting; not too

far forward or too far back; not too far inside or outside; not too brave nor timid; not too fast or too slow. We use terms such as quiet to describe the signals a rider gives the horse and the manner in which the horse responds. In short, we, as riders, are the dance partners of big, strong, fast animals; we have to have harmony.

Jim was unique in that he understood the above description, but he applied it to everything in his world. He found the middle with people, with school, his work ethic, his arguments, even his music. Now think of what a gift that was. A horse Jim worked could be led or be the leader. Jim understood both as he could follow or be followed and was, I felt, comfortable with both. I remember Jim staying right with the horse show regime all night and getting back home just before daylight. We hadn't eaten or slept, but Jim never complained the first bit. I had just gotten asleep when Jim announced that we should get up and go fishing since we had been working so hard! I was sure he needed some "slap therapy" but we went fishing. That morning we both caught the biggest bass either had ever caught and we had them mounted. Jim found the middle between two extremes and now every time I look up on the wall at that fish, I remember to find the middle between work and play.

While we were building our covered pen, I was working up high and Jim was nailing 2"x6" braces. I looked down and Jim was nailing right handed. Now Jim was very left handed, so I asked him about it and he said that he was seeing if his aim might be better. I looked down again and there was blood everywhere and Jim was back left-handed. He had mashed both thumbs and had blood spurting out and hadn't said a single word. That's finding the middle!

For so long after his death, I knew I would get better with time, but I sure wanted to buy some of that time now. I felt as if I was completely alone. Couldn't eat, couldn't sleep; all I wanted to do was work horses. I wanted to be with people, but I didn't want to be around people because they might bring up the pain again. I needed to talk about it, but I didn't want to talk about it because of the

pain. I cleaned out Jim's room and wanted to put away his things, but I didn't want to put his things away because I needed something to cling to.

I married and we are blessed with a son, Cody James. I want him to be my whole life, but I don't want him to be my whole life. What if we lose him like we lost Jim? I wanted another roping partner, but I didn't want one because I might suffer another loss.

I really thought I was tough and able to handle anything that could come along I looked at people with addictions such as alcohol, drug, gambling, phobias, whatever, as just being weak. Jim and I would always say, "You gotta kill yer own snakes." Shortly after Jim's death, I noticed I couldn't stand to go home. I was riding 20 hours a day. My clothes were hanging on me and I didn't even want to leave the farm. I wasn't desperate or suicidal or anything like that, I just wasn't living. As I walked out of the bar driveway, I saw a smashed beer can on the road and for the first time in my life, I understood how people could get into alcoholism, etc. I stood there and thought, if drinking or drugs or whatever would dull the pain, a pain like this, that consumes your whole being, even a tough person could fall victim. I remember thinking that if I had been a person to drink, I could easily get in that bottle and never come out again. A person wouldn't want to come out.

You know what was wrong with me? I couldn't find the middle, that feeling between being able to grieve over Jim's absence and the thankfulness I should have ever been blessed with him in the first place; the middle between being the toughest guy in the world and the weakest. In time, just like with training horses, I found the middle (the feeling, not the place) is always the best spot; to avoid the extremes. I guess you have to go to the extremes before you even know where they exist; what a pill to swallow!

Now, when Cody drops through the hayloft and lands on his head, I know that is one extreme and when he talks of the puppies we sell in his best Johnny Cochran imitation and says, "When the puppies grow they must go, "I know that is the other extreme. I don't live in the extremes anymore, I

seek the middle. When I'm so tom inside for Aunt Dinah during holidays, birthdays, with the way she must view Cody, I know she experiences both extremes; an awful longing for Jim and great joy for Cody. But she finds the middle. (When Cody starts school. I hope I can find the middle when he doesn't bring in straight A's.)

It's funny, I taught Jim a whole lot about horses in a short time, but he continues to teach me about living

Well, I hope this has been tolerable because it sure is good therapy for me. As we say to our riders, "keep a leg on each side and your mind in the middle."

Thanks Jim, we love you.

Wayne also wrote some of his "remembrances."

I remember my buddy, Jim, when I see an act of kindness and wonder why people aren't kinder.

I remember my buddy when I see someone pull for the underdog and wonder why we don't support each other more.

I remember my buddy when I see people having a good time and wonder why the good times don't seem quite as good now.

I remember Jim and me going to horse shows and having over the legal limit of fun and wondering why they aren't as much fun anymore.

I remember coming home from horse shows without my best buddy and wondering if it would always hurt this much.

I remember the big victories and wondering if they would always seem so hollow and meaningless because my best buddy was the only one that knew what it took to win.

I remember the concern in the ropers' condolences and wondered if they would always be concerned

I remember my best buddy "Little Jim" when we found out Sharon was growing a little boy inside her and wondering the more philosophical question.

I remember my buddy when we would get ultrasound pictures and knew his name would be Cody James.

I remembered my buddy as we awaited Cody's birth and I wondered

how bittersweet it must be for Aunt Dinah and Uncle Jim.

I remember Jim when Cody shows kindness and I try to show kindness.

I remember Jim when Cody pulls for the underdog and I try to be more supportive.

I remember my buddy when we are coming home from a show and Cody says, "Shows sure are fun" and I wonder how we can have so much fun.

I remember Jim winning his buckle when Cody says, "Dad, when I get big enough to rope, we're going to win 'buckle belts' but I'm going to win the coolest one" and I know Jim is proud.

I see the joy when the ropers ask about Cody and feel the concern when they remember Jim.

I remember Jim every time Cody is sick or in the middle of one of his many accidents and wonder at my thoughts of thankfulness and of great fear of loss.

I remember my little buddy, Jim, when I play with my little buddy, Cody, and wonder if we can have the same relationship.

I remember my best buddy, Jim, every time I have to repeat our motto, "You gotta kill yer own snakes."

*We love and remember you, buddy,
Wayne, Sharon and Cody*

Lee Lynch, Jim's cousin who received the first Jim Taylor Scholarship at Cumberland College, wrote this loving tribute about Young Jim:

I really do not know how to start, but the loss of someone you really care about is the toughest thing you will go through.

My name is Lee Lynch and I lost my cousin, Jim Taylor, about 6 years ago. I can remember every event of that day like it happened yesterday. It was something that I will never forget as long as I live. This was very hard to take and understand why it happened. You can never understand it. Grief is something that turns your life upside down.

I probably did some things that I shouldn't have done; the only thing that this did was to delay the process and make it longer. It is something that is always on my mind

My senior year in high school, I was playing my final year of baseball.

Before District and Regional tournaments, I took some time before and prayed and dedicated my performance to Jim, before I even knew how I would play.

Throughout the tournament, I felt that I wasn't alone, and that was the best baseball I ever played. In the two tournaments, I only struck out one time and had a batting average of .555.

During these tournaments, I was in the paper after every game. I still have the articles in a box with other things of mine and some things that I got from the car after he was in his wreck. These things I have had for a long time, and when I die, I hope to have these things buried with me so I will have these memories with me always.

Every day, I think about it and when some problem happens to me, it doesn't seem so bad after I went through that. This is something I will never get over, but it is something that helps me get through any rough times that I have. Today I feel blessed that I was able to have known Jim. I always try to think of the good times we shared instead of what happened and that's what lets me deal with his death.

Kathy Lynch, my sister-in-law and Lee's mother expressed her grief:

Death effects each of us differently. We each have our own way of dealing with and working through the grieving process. Jim and Lee were raised more like brothers than cousins. We lived across the street from each other and the boys were together constantly. When they were small, they even had little coats and hats that matched and everyone thought they were twins. I even justified having only one child with: "Well, Lee has Jim; that is his brother." Even when they grew into the teenage years and their interests took different paths, they were still "brothers" and remained close. They even talked about going to the same college and being roommates.

We never dreamed someone in our family would ever be taken from us at such an early age. Death is for the old and the ill. I was with Dinah when they told Jim about Jim's accident. My first reaction was shock and disbelief. How

could this be true? We were all numb with shock. Being a close knit family, I felt as if I had not lost a nephew, but one of my own children.

I worried first and foremost of how Lee would handle this tragedy. He was only 16 and the worst thing that had ever happened to him was being grounded for coming home late. Being a private person like his father, Lee would not talk about Jim and I knew he was holding all his feelings inside. I also worried about how Dinah and Jim would survive this death. I am a very emotional person, so I shed many tears. I was able to talk about Jim and his death with Dinah. It helped me to be able to talk about him and listen to her and be able to cry together.

Dinah began to read books on grief and passed them on to me. I read and read, hoping to find the answers to my own questions and how to deal with the ache that I had in my heart. I looked for answers on how to help Dinah and Jim. I looked and prayed for answers about how to help my own child heal and come to terms with Jim's death. The books helped me understand the process of grief, but I knew I would have to find the answers to my questions myself.

I remember the night of Jim's funeral. We all gathered in his room and reminisced about his life. We laughed and each recounted our favorite stories about him. This brought our family together and helped us share our grief.

The weeks after the funeral were hard. The shock had worn off and other emotions came flooding in. I was angry that this had happened to our family. Everything was going so great. Jim was ready to graduate and go on to college. Why had this happened to our good, Christian family? I worried about Lee. He still would not talk about Jim and what he was feeling. He bottled everything up inside and I knew it had to escape somehow. It did! He started partying and drinking. I guess it helped to dull the pain he felt. I knew I just had to let him handle it his way. I became paranoid. Every time he went out, I was racked with fear. If he wasn't home on time, I just knew something terrible had happened because he was traveling the same road on which Jim was killed. I tried so hard not to

become overprotective. Then I felt guilty. I felt guilty that Lee was still alive and Jim was gone. Anytime anything good happened to Lee, I wanted to share it with Dinah, but didn't know how she would take it. I knew she loved Lee and wanted to know what was going on in his life and be a part of it, but it made me feel so guilty. My son was alive and hers was gone. I think this emotion bothered me the most.

I think what has helped the most is the way our family has continued to keep Jim alive in our memories. There isn't a time when we are together that we don't talk about Jim and laugh about the crazy things he did. Whenever I hear a good joke, I always think, "Jim would like that one." When Lee got married, he had a western wedding and Jim's boots became part of the wedding table decorations filled with wild flowers. He was there that day with us. My daughter-in-law and I have both had dreams where we talked to Jim and he gave us messages.

It is still hard for Lee to talk about Jim and his feelings openly. People say nothing good comes from death, but it isn't true. We know we can't bring Jim back, so we have moved on, but many things have come from his death I have learned not to "sweat the small stuff" There are many little things that used to get me torn up and now they just don't matter. Jim will always be a part of our lives.

Lois Taylor, (who diligently proofs the newsletter every month) is Young Jim's "Aunt Lolo." She wrote about her perception of grief and concluded with a poem:

Dinah has asked family members to write about the loss of loved ones from the perspective of extended family. My husband and I are Young Jim's uncle and aunt. However, we lived out of state for many years and moved to Williamsburg just about four years before Young Jim's death We had, of course, seen him on several occasions prior to our moving here, but we really got to know fun-loving and very nice young man when we moved here permanently.

We feel the loss, I think, in a very different way. We naturally miss Young

Jim very much, but we also hurt for Jim and Dinah They are our brother and sister, and it is very painful to see them hurting and not know just what to say or do. We can't begin to comprehend their hurt, and it is difficult for us to know just what we should say or do to not add to the hurt. Therefore, I think we mostly don't say or do enough.

Dinah and Jim both have a wonderful Christian spirit that I believe helps them cope with their loss, and because of that, I think it is easier for us as extended family to cope. They talk freely of Young Jim, whenever the opportunity arises, and it is always in an "upbeat" sense. They talk about the fun he was, and the good he did, and the mischief he made. Young Jim was certainly "all boy" and not perfect, and they do not glorify nor exaggerate his goodness, but they also do not dwell on the morbid or depressing aspects of the loss.

Also, since everyone grieves differently, what is right for one may not be right for another. That is even true, I think, within one's own family. That makes it even more difficult to know how to respond. It just has to be an individual thing. For example, Dinah cries more than Jim, but I think that is probably common between men and women. Usually, when Dinah cries and I'm there, I cry too. How could I not? How could anyone not? Her loss is immeasurable, and I hurt for her, for Jim and for myself. But, I think anything we can talk about and cry about and laugh about helps make life better.

I don't believe Jim and Dinah will ever "get over" the loss of Young Jim, and in some ways they are different people, but not in the ways that matter. They were always loving, caring, and giving, and are probably even more so now. Their list of friends has grown dramatically because it now includes "Fellow Travelers." I believe you are the only ones who can really know and fully understand their loss, but I hope you will remember that we extended family members love you and want to do our best to support you. Since we don't always know how, I think the only way is for you to let us know specifically what we can do to help. You go ahead and talk, cry, laugh, whatever... we'll be here no matter what. We may not say enough, we may say too much, but we love you. Just let us know when we mess up and we'll try to do better

Young Jim from Aunt Lolo

Young Jim was a cowboy
We all remember that
But it's hard to recall the little things
Like the tilt of his cowboy hat.

He was an excellent rider and roper
We certainly remember this
But it's hard to recall the little things
Like how he felt about his first kiss.

His hair was blond and his eyes were
blue

This we remember too
But it's hard to recall the little things
Like when he learned to tie his shoe.

His cheeks were soft and held a
dimple We remember this very well
But it's hard to recall the little things
Like the sound of his laughter when he
heard Ms. Compton yell

He's with us still, tho' not to touch
and we'll always miss that so very
much No kisses, no hugs, but
memories

galore
Fill our hearts, but we still want more
His memory is with us and at least we
know

We'll see him again, when it's our turn
to go.

Jim's symbols are angels,
a Pegasus, and horses.



Frank and Susan Van Vleck's 19-year-old son, Marc, was killed by a drunk driver 7-18-92. Marc's uncle wrote this poem:

Dearest Mom and Dad

Hold me tight mama, this is a new
world!
I hear your loving, sweet voice so clear.
Do I have your eyes, maybe daddy's
nose?
Don't cry mama, smile on the memory.

"Mama!" There, I said it!
Gee, that wasn't so tuff.
Let's try another one.
Don't cry daddy, hear my voice.

This is so hard, but it looks so easy.
Catch me quick, so I don't fall daddy!

*I'll try to make it across the room.
Don't cry mama, feel my little hand..*

*Boy, I'm so excited about school!
All these great playmates, except the
girls
I wonder what I'll learn? When's
recess?!*

Don't cry daddy, amuse at my papers.

*Did you see me hit that ball mom?!
Grandpa would certainly be proud!
Let's play catch when we get home dad!
Don't cry mama, recall the summer
fun!*

*Sure, I'd love to play the trumpet!
What are these buttons on the top?
Listen! I can play, I can play!
Don't cry daddy, relive my first recital.*

*Come my friend, lay down on my
couch.
What seems to be troubling you?
The answer is to grasp adventure!
Don't cry mama, let our talks linger.*

*We're moving where? What about my
friends? You know, this sure doesn't
look like*

Oz.

*The hills and pine trees are amazing!
Don't cry daddy, sense the anticipation!*

*Sprayberry High is not so bad after all!
A lot of nice kids and the band is great!
My friends think our open home is out-
rageous!*

Don't cry mama, listen to the laughter!

*I cannot believe I won the award!
Leading the band, oh yes, what a thrill!
Give me a tune, give me a parade, let's
play!
Don't cry daddy, see the knees kicking
high!*

*Yes, Georgia Tech. The absolute best
university!
Don't know-maybe engineering, maybe
law enforcement?*

*I just want to learn, live a whole new
culture, and have fun!*

*Don't cry mama, thanks for the guid-
ance and for just being there.*

*You know, I've met this real comforting
person. He fills our cups.
Peace and happiness surrounds me like
a warm familiar blanket.*

*Notes sound forth from my horn as
beautiful as a songbird's refrain! Don't
cry daddy, let my trumpet melody
draw you nearer.*

*Hearts bonded for eternity, I am pre-
sent!*

*In time my presence will be known to
you forever.
I love you all so very dearly, Marc.
Don't cry mama, don't cry daddy, feel
my kiss.*

--Richard Magner

Willie and Ella Prater's daughter, Merri Kathryn (17), died from an automobile accident 4-3-96. Kathryn's cousin, Dr. Phil Prater, gave these remarks at her funeral:

Merri Kathryn

The constraints of time and distance do not allow me the good fortune to know my cousins as well as I would like to. I loved Merri Kathryn and would have done anything for her, but I am sure that there are those here who knew her better than I did. However, I want to share three great lessons of life that Merri Kathryn taught me over the four days that I visited with her and got to know her better.

The first lesson is something I had always suspicioned, but the reality of which I had never seen until now:

That is the loyalty of the people in this community is not just casual or friendly, but it is fierce. For days now I have witnessed the transformation of the UK. Med Center lobbies and waiting rooms into Knott County's northwest annex. Young people were fellowshiping and praying and serving as a witness to the rest of the folk that passed through that lobby, that they were there with purpose, comparison and love for a native daughter. This transformation leads me to only one conclusion: that Merri Kathryn was more than just a friend or classmate, she was truly their sister.

Secondly, she showed me how faith in God can lead us through the greatest of life's tribulations, the loss of a child Any of us with children, who visited with Merri Kathryn could easily picture our child lying there. But the hand of God and the power of His Holy Spirit are truly upon Willie and Ella Mae, because even through the immense pain and heartache that they have experienced, a divine peace abides in them. Their grief in the days to come would

be impossible for anyone lacking God's touch, yet the Lord brings forth healing comfort to their broken hearts.

Lastly, Merri Kathryn taught me about the mystery of God's greater plan. My grandmother, Della, and I were talking the other day and were lamenting about how seemingly unfair it was for such a young, vibrant life to be taken. She quandered, "Phil... I just don't understand the mystery of life sometimes. Here I have lived out my life and I am ready to go be with the Lord. Why couldn't I trade places with Merri Kathryn?" As many (if you know, my grandmother buried her only child about a year and a half ago. I had no answer for her. The doctors and nurses have no answers. The theologians have no clear answers. Maybe it's because we can only analyze life's events in a human frame of time and in a human plane 'if understanding-, whereas the concept of God's plan reaches from one end of eternity to the other; beyond time and space, and anything that is comprehensible to our mind. But maybe at this time in God's infinite and omnipotent revelation, with the world in the terrible shape that it is in, maybe Della, God just needed a cheerleader right now, in heaven.

On the morning after Merri Kathryn's accident, the message that my Dad brought me caused a great stirring inside me, and I knew then that we should go to Willie and Ella and give them a message of hope, for miracles do happen with the fervent, corporate prayers of God's people. Hours of worry and wait drove me the long hallway past Merri Kathryn's room. As I paced by her cubicle, God instilled a mental picture, or vision of Merry Kathryn wandering in the darkness and mist of her unconsciousness. We all prayed for God to find her and bring her out of that dark place; to lead her back to the light as only He could. As God is my witness, Willie and Ella Mae, Tammy and Chris, today I know, that in fact, this prayer has been answered. For on Wednesday evening as those nurses closed the curtain around her bed, another curtain was opened and God reached out 'if the heavens with a gentle, merciful hand and lifted Merri Kathryn out of the mist and into a glorious place, full of light and life

and healing. And as sure as the mountains stand guard around us, I know that there is a new face in heaven today. A beauty without blemish or scar, with skin as pure a new snow, golden flowing hair, and a smile as wide as the gates of glory. And as she takes her seat at the right hand of the Father, a choir of angels sings a song to welcome her, while the bells in heaven ring. Yes, for Merri Kathryn and her family and friends today, there is a song of unspeakable joy and the bells in heaven ring.

Michael, the 23-year-old son of Dick and Jean Sand, was killed in an automobile accident 6-18-94. Jean's sister wrote this June 22, 1994:

Michael Scott Sand, 23 years old, was put on this earth but a stopping place.

A pause in what's to be a resting place along the road to sweet eternity.

We all have different journeys, different paths along the way,

We all were meant to learn some thing, but never meant to stay...

Our destination is a place far greater than we know,

For some the journey's quicker, for some the journey's slow.

And when the journey finally ends, we'll claim a great reward,

And find an everlasting peace together with the Lord.

Michael Scott Sand loved his short lived life. He especially loved his family. His wonderful Mother, wonderful Father, wonderful sister and wonderful brother and brother-in-law, two beautiful nephews and his wonderful grandparents. He was the type of guy that gave his heart to his family and friends.

Mike we all love you and will never stop loving you. Pray for all of us.

--Aunt Joan



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

Barry, the 21-year-old son of Doris Gulley, died when a wall fell on him, 6-27-95. Ruth Latham wrote the following tribute about Barry:

I'm writing this in memory of Barry Wayne Gulley. He is the only child of David and Doris Gulley.

I liked Barry the first time I met him. He was my son's best friend. He was a good boy.

I'm not related to Barry, but my family and I grew to love him as one of our own.

When we received the news of Barry's death, we just couldn't believe it. I have to say it was weird, because our own Jason was killed by a drunk driver on March 13, 1995. It was just too unbelievable for them both to be gone.

After Jason died, Barry came by to see us every day. Our girls leaned on him and so did we, because he was the last person to see Jason alive.

It is so hard to understand. The only comfort we find is in knowing they're still together in heaven, and we know we'll see them again someday.

We love Barry always and miss him terribly.

Ralph and Ruth Latham's 21-year-old son, Jason, was killed by a drunk driver, 3-13-95. Jason's aunt, Sue Horton, wrote these poems:

Dear Family:

Dear family, Don't look for me as before.

I am not here anymore.

Don't mourn for me where I lie,

I am not there, I did not die.

I went to my Father on high.

Look for me in the soft spring rain, Or in the flowers of spring Listen for me in the birds that sing.

See me in the clear blue sky,

Or in an eagle soaring high.

I am these things and many more,

And I shall live forevermore.

So dear ones, please don't mourn, For I walk with He who, for the world was born.

I am with you in your heart,

A place where we will never part.

We are together as never before,

I wait for you on God's bright shore.

If you grieve don't grieve for me,

Grieve for those who will never be

With our Father for eternity.

Dear ones forget your pain, For we will meet once again. In a place with no sin, pain or sorrow.

I will see you there, on that great 'morrow.

To take a life, is to take a life.

Whether you use a gun, car or a knife.

Someone loses a husband, daughter, son or wife.

The loss is as great, no matter what you use,

The family of the lost one will forever and always lose.

An act like this, will rip a family life apart,

It ravages their mind and rips apart their heart.

Never again will they hear this one's footsteps at the door,

Or hear this loved one's voice as they did before.

This life has been stilled and can never be replaced.

The loss is irrevocable; it can never be undone.

Choosing willfully to drink and drive, is like packing a loaded gun.

The life you take with either, to me should be held the same,

Because this loved one can never, walk, talk, laugh, love or ever be again.

So think carefully when you choose to drink and drive,

For this you do by choice.

Do you want to be responsible for stilling a living voice?

A letter to Jason

Dear Jas.,

I am writing to you because I don't remember the name of the person who took you from us and I know you will listen and understand.

When I heard of your death, I could not believe it and I did not want to believe it. I still don't. Why you, why not the drunk who hit your car? I felt anger, hate, and like a part of me was missing. Grief we will feel for a long time. "Why?" I still ask myself and "God, Why you?"

That boy will have three or four years out of the rest of his life, when he took all of yours. It is not right. I know you would tell me to forgive him. But I can't do that just yet. I don't feel

the hate as I did before, so that is good, isn't it?

But now I just keep seeing you and hearing you call me "Aunt Doo" when you were little. I feel guilty because I didn't see you enough as you were growing up. And I cannot remember the last time I told you "I love you."

Jas, I know you are with God and are at peace, but we still hurt. That boy will be able to do all the things you can not. I can only feel that you were cheated of all the things you wanted to do with your life. Help me, Jason, to forgive him, or how can I expect God to forgive me. Help me to remember you as you were, loving, happy and caring, and sweet boy that is you.

All my love,
Aunt Sue



Jason's symbols are a boy angel and a UK basketball.

Dale and Marlene Stokes' 20-year-old son, Darren, committed suicide, 3-31-86. Marlene shared what has not only happened with her family, but is true of many of our family members:

In your January newsletter, you stated you would like for us to send writings about our extended family's struggles with their grief over the loss of our child.

My husband and I believe we may be one of the many who got no support from our family. I would be afraid to ask some of them, especially my mother; yes, my mother! When Darren was buried, my mother was sitting right beside me, of course I hadn't seen or talked to her after the tragic suicide happened the evening of March 31, and this was Thursday afternoon. She says,

"What happened? Was it drugs or dope?" She proceeds to say, "Did you get his things, clothing, etc.? You probably don't want them anyway." She said this right at the cemetery as we were sitting right alongside the casket.

I was struggling so hard to control my emotions. I did not want to break down in front of all those people, but I made it. I was in total shock. I could not believe this happened to Darren.

Then, 4 months later, the month of Darren's birthday (7-22), my mother says, "Did you ever find out what happened to Darren? Do you believe Darren did this to himself (shot himself)?" I said, "Yes." She says, "WELL, he didn't know how to act anyway; probably drugs, dope." She rambled on about trouble, etc. I have never forgiven my mother for saying such terrible things right to my face! This has caused me so much pain, to think she could think so little of her first grandchild I have told so many people this situation. The only thing they usually say is, "Your mother must be a very unhappy person." I know she is extremely jealous of everyone, especially me, her only daughter. I have one brother.

So, for the last 10 years, almost 11, I have not said Darren's name to her one time!! I can talk about Darren on my husband's side of the family, but not much has been said about him. My whole support has been from reading all the material and books, **The Compassionate Friend's newsletters, Alive Alone** and your newsletter I receive each month. Also, writing to two special ladies for the past 7 years.

Darren was my delight, my hopes and dreams, my greatest gift in life. How could this happen? Darren was in his second year of college. His dream was to be a forest ranger.

I have found out through searching my family's history, that depression ran in the family; my father, his father, his sister, his grandmother and her daughter.

I knew Darren would have times when he would be depressed, but, me not being a depressed person, I just figured it was part of being a teenager. I have asked myself many times how could a handsome, intelligent and sensitive young man, 21 years old, take his life. What could be so bad he saw no other way out of his emotional pain?

Darren took on the world's problems. The environment concerned him greatly. He took on the problems of his friends, his family and the world That's too tall an order for anyone to fill!

And my mother had the nerve to say Darren didn't know how to act! She didn't even know him that well. She was always more interested in herself.

My new year's resolutions are, one, try harder to deal more successfully about Darren's suicide, which I have for almost 11 years, but I think this coming year, I will have come to realize what happened just happened; who can really explain it?

I can only sum this letter up by saying: I miss the future with Darren, I miss the past, his presence, argumentativeness, his stubbornness, his handsome face, his tall, strong body. I miss this young man who'd have been the most important person in my life for many years.

I miss being Darren's mom!!



Darren's symbol is a deer.

Cecil and Jolene Hutchinson lost their only child, Anne Haake (28) and their grandson, Paxston (5 weeks old), in an automobile accident, 6-27-96.

Paxston's symbol is a teddy bear, and Anne's symbols are a "Mother and child" and collie.



Jolene's sister shared her memories:

I am Maxine Yankey, Jolene Hutchinson's sister. Her daughter, Anne and grandson, Paxton's deaths were very tragic to our family and community. Their deaths touched so many lives. God has shown us the truth of one of His promises that all things work together for good to those that love the Lord and are called according to His purpose (His will). The good is, we have seen family and friends lives changed. Some have been drawn to Jesus Christ and have been baptized and we have seen families back together that had been separated.

I also lost a child. He was born with Cerebral Palsy and lived almost seven years. My parents also lost a child when he was seven years old with Pneumonia.

Anne and my daughter, Rhonda, were close. They both would have liked to have had a sister but didn't, so being first cousins was a good substitute.

I have many good memories of Anne. I was with Jolene when Anne was born.

Anne was a pretty little girl, full of energy and life and had a strong will, which is great during teenage years, especially. That way, peer pressure would not cause her to get on the wrong track.

Anne was a person with so many ideas and an energetic brain. She told me a few weeks before the accident that if her body would cooperate with her brain, they could accomplish many things.

We were preparing for a family reunion on June 29, 1996, with family coming from several states. On June 27, Anne and Paxston were tragically killed.

1996 was a difficult year. My mother fell and broke bones in her back and hip. Then she moved in with my husband and me and still lives with us. My oldest son and his wife divorced. They have four children. Also, my pastor's wife, at age forty, had a stroke which left her handicapped.

Anne's baby was born in May and I was busy getting my mother's house cleaning done. The first week after Paxston was born, I was sick all week. The next four weeks I was busy getting ready for the reunion. I felt so guilty that I spent my time doing this and not helping Anne. I knew some of the family would be at Mother's house and I wanted her to be proud of her clean home.

I was at Anne's three or four times during Paxton's short life. I got to bathe him once. He really loved his bath.

I felt so empty for at least three weeks after the accident. Then one day, I was talking to Nellie Good. She was Anne's baby sitter until Anne was capable of staying alone. Nellie told me that grief takes so many hours, days, weeks and even months, or years of your life. She had gone through eight months of grief over a family member and she decided she would not permit the devil to cause her to waste time grieving again. "There is too much work to be done," she said. Referring to the Lord's work. And that's what helped me to start getting over the grief. The first few weeks after the accident, when I was with Jolene, the spirit of sadness was so overwhelming, it would get to me so strongly, but I

began to speak to that mountain of grief to "be gone from me in Jesus' name." It was too painful to keep baring it so I just kept casting it on the Lord. That's what he wants us to do, cast our care on Him because He cares for us. His word says to keep our mind on good things, so I think about the good from her life and not about the sadness of missing her.

It's normal to grieve, but after a while, we have to make the choice to let go or stay in it and I believe Anne would say to us, "Go on."

We will always have part of Anne through her little boy, Parker. He looks like her and has characteristics like her.

The Bible says to give thanks in all things, not for the tragedy, but in the tragedy, we give Him thanks anyway and praise. We praise and thank Him for sparing Parker and Melina. They were both with Anne and Paxston. If you could have seen the car, you would say, "Yes, God did a miracle."

I still think about Anne daily and miss her a lot, but we go on, one day at a time.

Another letter from a family member:

I am Jolene's oldest sister, Lois.

Anne's tragic death is the most devastating thing that has ever happened to me and my whole family. Anne was always special. Special to me from when she first came into this world 28 years ago.

We didn't live in Danville, we moved away in 1958 so we weren't around Anne a lot, but our time with her was always so special. She would come and spend time with us at our home at times and I loved her as if she were my own child. My husband and both of my girls felt the same way about her.

Anne was different in some way, it's hard to explain. I mean this in a good way. It was like Anne knew you so well. The gifts you got from her were just perfect and you loved them. She gave me a devotional book for each day of the year. She gave me a picture to hang on the wall and she said, "It just looked like your house. I love and cherish all the things she gave me.

It has been months now since the accident and I'm still having a rough time with her death. I think about her all the time, every day. My girls have really had a rough time dealing with it too. I pray time and time again, each day for Jeff, Parker and Jolene and Cecil

because I know if I am hurting as badly as I am, I can't imagine what they are going through.

Anne was the baby in our family, my youngest niece, my parents' youngest grandchild, and you just don't think about the youngest member being taken. We know it can happen and does happen to other people, but just don't think about it happening to our family.

Jolene and I were talking on the phone the night it happened. The operator broke in and said I had an emergency phone call from the hospital in Danville. My granddaughter, Melina, was spending the week with Anne and of course she was in the car with Anne. They told me about the car accident and Parker and Melina had survived, but Anne and Paxston had not made it. I couldn't breathe. I just screamed I had to put the phone down and get control of my self.

I think about Parker being left without his Mommy and baby brother. They were one happy family. Jeff, Anne's husband, loved Anne and his boys more than most men. He really showed it. Anne was so happy. She loved her babies so much and was proud of them. She just seemed so happy with everything in her life.

Even though Anne and Paxston's deaths were so tragic and devastating, our family has so much to be thankful for. My granddaughter, Melina, 12, and Parker, 3, were spared and we all know it could have taken them too. When we got to Danville and my husband went to see the car, he was so emotional. We realized it was Anne and Paxston's time to go be with the Lord, but He wasn't ready for Melina and Parker. He has more for them to do here on earth.

All of us need to live our lives each day as though it will be our last and tell our families how much we love them so we won't have any regrets if anything does happen. I do know one thing, our family will never be the same. Anne was so young and her life taken so quickly. We all have heavy hearts, but we go on and take one day at a time. As a Christian, we know we will see them again and that's what helps me more than anything at this time.

Gary and Viola Correll's son, Michael (15), was killed in an electrical shock-drowning 8-9-95. Michael's paternal grandmother, Neva Jo Correll, wrote this tribute:

A TRIBUTE TO MY GRANDSON, MICHAEL CORRELL

As I try to put into words how I have dealt with losing my only grandson at such a young age, so many things go through my mind; but my first reaction is "not very well!"

Michael was such a wonderful grandson. He was so handsome and so nice. With his beautiful dark brown eyes, long eyelashes, coal-black hair, and winning smile, he was just about perfect.

Unlike some, perhaps, I find it helps to talk about Michael. In fact, it is easier to talk about him than to think about him, which I still do almost all the time when I am not mentally busy. From the time Michael died, I have found that as long as my mind is occupied, I can do okay; but when I am not mentally occupied, my mind is on Michael, no matter where I am or what I am doing.

The thoughts are not always sad thoughts, because to think of Michael is to:

Feel his arm around my shoulder as he always did when he came in and hear his voice saying, "Hi, MaMaw, how are ya?" Or,

"Thanks for dinner, MaMaw, that was good!" Or,

Until the last couple of years as he began to mature, "It's my turn to sit by MaMaw (at the dinner table)." Or,

The last time I saw him when I had made French Blueberry pies for him and his cousins, and when he finished eating he said "That was good." I told him he could take the other one with him and said "All Right!!" Or,

To see him in his tux singing in the chorus, or romping with Bubba and Brandon (my great grandsons) who adored him, or directing traffic in his police explorer uniform.

All of these are pleasant memories of a young man who could light up a room

with his smile and make you feel like a million dollars with his attitude and words.

Sitting through church is difficult for me because the songs and words, that are meant to be comforting just seem to cause me to dwell more on what we have had to give up, and although I believe with all my heart that Michael is in heaven and we will see him there, I miss him so, and, yes, I wish he was still with us.

Perhaps the hardest thing for me has been to take a real interest in anything, although I seem compelled to go through the motions. I feel almost as if I am two people with one being driven by some inner force that makes me eat, sleep, work, and move on while the other says, "Why am I doing this?" and "What's the use?" Solomon asked those questions centuries ago, and his conclusion was that only by living for God can we bring any meaning to it all.

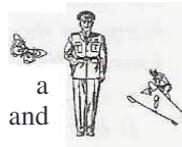
For me, I feel that I am going through the ritual of living, but I am no longer complete. Although I love and enjoy my granddaughters and great grandsons, my family has something missing, and the hole left by Michael's absence makes nothing quite the same as it was before.

I have no desire to forget. I want to keep Michael's memory alive as one of the brightest and most beautiful experiences any grandmother could hope for. I know many lives have been blessed by knowing him, and only eternity will tell how many lives were turned around by his death; but God is on His throne, and all things work together for good for those who know Him.

God does give a peace to us that helps us carry on, and as we get ready to welcome the birth of our new grandchild, we are reminded that the miracle of conception, birth, life, and death are all part of God's wonderful plan. To accept God's plan for us even though it brings pain at times, will give us peace and joy in the end.

Michael, I love you!

Michael's symbols are a butterfly, a policeman and water skis.



Michael and Linda Miller's 18-year-old son, Michael D., was killed in an automobile accident 2-15-95. Michael D.'s uncle, Maynard Miller, remembers him:

I REMEMBER

We tend to make sails of people after they are gone. Maybe the tendency comes from wanting to remember only the good things, or perhaps to escape the pain from remembering the undesirable things.

It is much easier to remember the good about some people than about others because their positive qualities far outweigh their negative. Such a person was Michael D. Allowing for human frailties, which all of us have, I will always remember Michael D. as a young man with certain unmistakable qualities.

I remember him as loving. He had a genuine affection for his parents, although he did not always agree with them. His devotion to grandparents and other family members could be keenly sensed. He cared about his peers and their welfare.

I remember him as honest. It seemed he did not have it in him to harbor falsehood. He was truthful, even when the consequences for being truthful might be painful. His word was dependable.

I remember him as respectful. Almost without exception, he demonstrated an attitude of high regard for other people, peers and authority figures alike. His respectfulness showed itself in sincere courtesy and kindness.

I remember him as inquisitive. He was curious about a lot of things, and explored areas of activity with which he was not familiar. While growing up, until his death, he pursued his interests in music, Boy Scouts, church, guns golf, fishing and hunting, athletics, motorcycles, school projects, and employment.

I remember him as industrious. With a sense of responsibility, he undertook tasks and with rare exception, followed them through to completion. His work ethic motivated him to find jobs and to work well, with or without pay.

I remember him as loyal. He believed in observing the rules, at home,

school, work and elsewhere, and was willing to go it alone, if necessary, to maintain his loyalty and integrity. He appeared to be at peace with himself in his commitment to right.

I remember Michael D. Though he is no longer physically with us, memory of his quality of life will always be with us as his legacy and inspiration.



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



Sue Wilson's 15-year-old daughter, Taiann, was murdered with her boyfriend, Matt Coomer, 8-31-95. Taiann's friend, Jessie, talked about the effect of Taiann's death:

I really have had a bad week. I mean here the past couple days, actually weeks, I have just thought about her (Taiann) and thought about her. I will be 17 soon, and I now realize she can't celebrate it with me. I sometimes wish that it was me that died and not her, so she could still be her, spreading cheer and happiness.

I know Tai is always with me, but not like I want it, I really feel a part of me died with her. It's a part of me that will never be replaced I remember one time she wrote me a note and it said, "Jessie, I want you to store all of our memories in your heart, and never let them go." I can remember from the first time I met her 'til the last time I saw her, like it was yesterday. I also remember her telling me, "A true friend is someone you can stay away from for years and the next time you meet, it's like you haven't even been apart." That is how she and I were.

I know I can't change the past, I wish I could, but I can't, but I can change the future. I made a vow to her the other day that I will succeed in life, and I will see her again. No one understands how close we were. No matter if we didn't talk at times, there was always a special bond between us. I miss her so much.

Sue's sister shared:

My sister told me of your newsletter. These are my thoughts and feelings about how the death of Taiann has

affected our family, and more specifically, my son, Taiann's cousin.

People ask, "How are you?" and I wonder if I'll ever get to the first level of okay, but I put on the public facade and say, "Okay, thanks for asking."

Unless you've been there, you can't imagine what losing a child can do to a family. The reliving of the murder, the "what ifs" and "if onlys."

This senseless, cruel act has changed my life as well as the lives of our entire family forever.

Taiann Nicole Wilson (is-was) the daughter of my sister. My heart aches for her loss.

Taiann and my son, Aaron, had a relationship that many people live a lifetime in search of. They were favorite cousins, best of friends, confidantes, and enjoyed doing everything together. They loved snow skiing, water skiing, swimming, camping, hiking, exploring Grandpa's farm, and building sand castles at the beach. I could go on, but you get the picture.

How does my son, at sixteen, get over such a loss? He doesn't. This evil act of random murder has changed his life from innocence to hardness, from youthful joy to a lingering sadness. We have suffered through what seems to be a frozen state of anxiety, nightmares, sleeplessness, panic attacks, anger, and even considering suicide.

This is just a glimpse of one person's life that was altered and forever damaged by the murder of a precious life - Tai.

Taiann's symbol is a dolphin jumping through a heart.



Don V., the 16-year-old son of Don and Janie Drye, was killed in an automobile accident 7-27-93. Don V's cousin, Matthew Harmon shared his memories:

My memories of Don V.

You were my cousin, like a brother I never had and best friend I'll always remember our laughs together, and our play days were happy. You always shared your new toys with that beautiful smile on your face.

Memories linger everyday and memories forever.

Dan's symbols are an airplane and an eagle.



Luke, the 15-year-old son of Nim and Clara Patterson, died from an accidental gunshot, 9-12-94. Luke's Aunt Peggy Patterson, shared her memories:

One evening while fixing dinner, Luke came by on his four wheeler. As I stirred a simmering pot on the stove, he sat at the kitchen table and talked. Looking around the room, he spotted a rock in a curio cabinet and asked me about it. I took it out and handed it to him. I laughed as I told him how Ron had made fun of me for collecting rocks. He said he collected them, too. As he turned the rock in his hand, he said it was beautiful. I told him he could have it. He said he couldn't, it was too nice. I said, "You should only give gifts you really like yourself." He jumped to his feet holding the rock tightly. I said, "Go ahead, take it." He turned on his heels and was out the door. A few minutes later the four wheeler could be heard coming back down the drive. I thought it was strange because the sun had already set. Luke came running back in, handed me a rock, and said, "This isn't as nice, but it's my favorite." He threw his arms around my neck, gave me a hug and said, "I love you." I said, "I love you, too." The words were hardly out of my mouth before he was headed for the door. "Gotta go," he said, "Mom worries if I'm out after dark."

Luke's Aunt Janet shared this:

When I think of Luke, with his wide smile and sparkling eyes, I see the young man who had everything. He had talent, charisma, strength, charm, and the ambition to go after anything he wanted From infancy 'til his teens, Luke was a fighter and a winner.

We all reach a point in our lives when we ask ourselves "Just what impression will I leave on this world?" I believe that Luke left an impression with everyone that proves how good parents can bring out the best. He made his mark on this world and on each of the hearts who knew him. He

did this through his love and passion for others and the game of basketball.

No one who ever met Luke will ever forget him. He was like no other; unique in his own special ways, as are all of us. Yet, Luke was special. He is loved by all his family and friends and we miss him more than words can say. We will see him again in a better world

Aunt Denise shared:

A Welcome Shadow

I never thought this would be something our family would experience so soon. When we first heard of Luke's accident, I remember feeling totally helpless. I wasn't able to help him, I couldn't fully understand the depth of pain. Nim and Clara must have been experiencing losing one of their children. Also, to try and explain to my children (his young cousins) the reason why things happen the way they do.

As time passes by (slowly when I am missing him) the memories do not fade. I reflect back a lot and smile;

Him shooting baskets in the rain

His swollen eyes at age 2 after a bee sting

Wading the creek to catch "froggers" Cowboy boots, no shirt and shorts Watching wrestling

Driving thru fast food when everyone else was eating somewhere else

(His cousin, Nick, is the same way)

Mostly, though, I don't have to look back on memories. It feels as if he's here experiencing everything right along with us. Just like a shadow.

Knowing he's there is a comfort.

Dustin Wynn writes:

I write this in memory of Luke Patterson, as his friend and relative. He left us all too soon, just days before his sixteenth birthday. Now, as I approach the same age, I'm reminded of the times he and I would spend together. The food, fights, childish discussions, and most of all, the prayers. Every night before our heads were laid upon our pillows, the prayers would be said-no exceptions.

No one could get to be quite like Luke. No one could get me as mad, as aggravated, or as hurt, as Luke. Although, through it all, I knew his love for me remained. No matter what our

problems, he always had me back, to the end.

We were all deprived of a certain love when Luke was taken from us. We may have had a burden bestowed upon us with his loss, but I do believe we were blessed, truly blessed with knowing this young man, and being a part of his life.

Luke's symbol is a basketball with wings and #00.



Karen Hall's husband, Denzil, and only child, Nikole, were killed in an automobile accident, 1-10-93. Karen said, *God granted me the privilege of giving birth to a lovely, angelic girl on May 14, 1982. I am so grateful for this. Nikole was such a blessing to our family. Olivia Nikole Hall touched more lives in her short span of 10 1/2 years than most who live to be much older. There are not enough positive adjectives to describe her. Nikole's maternal grandparents, James and Elizabeth Duff, reflected:*

Olivia Nikole Hall was one of our precious grandchildren. She was a beautiful and adorable little girl. She was full of life, enjoying so many things around her, ahead of so many her age in numerous fields, Nikole was a loving young girl with a pleasing personality. When you looked into the eyes of one so pretty, you have to thank the Heavenly Father for giving us her to love, even for a short period of time. Yes, we as maternal grandparents do have an absence in our heart and we often cry because we no longer have her with us. By our faith in Jesus Christ, we believe some day there will be a reunion.

Aunt Reva Duff Guiler shared:

Nikole will always be remembered for her beautiful smile and bubbly giggle. She was very talented. Her musical accomplishments were so promising. Her gorgeous face will remain in our thoughts forever.

Nikole's aunt, Rita Duff Osborne wrote this:

How can you state in a few words the beauty, energy, music ability, and joy this child, Nikole, brought to our lives. She always loved to cheer. She was constantly doing gymnastics in the house. She loved being around people and, in turn, it became vice versa. She will always be special and we are blessed by having her touch our lives.

Denzil and Nicole's symbols are musical notes.



Pat Kuzela sent this card and I took the test. Guess what? I was able to answer yes to all of them!! I hope you will too!!

Do you ever hide chocolate in your desk drawer?

When you are tired or frustrated, do you sometimes console yourself with chocolate?

Do you ever sneak a quick piece of chocolate cake before going to a health food restaurant?

Do holidays and social occasions become excuses for indulging in chocolate?

Is chocolate contributing to your complexion problems, weight gain, and cleaning bills?

Have you ever bitten the ear of someone's Easter bunny and tried to cover it up?

Are you a secret hot fudge sundae eater?

Are you often tempted to eat a chocolate bar while waiting in line at the supermarket?

Do you promise yourself to cut back on your chocolate eating?

Do you suspect that some of your friendships are based on a shared enthusiasm for chocolate?

If you answered, 'yes' to one or more of these questions" . . .

... "Let's get together for a snack sometime... how about J.I.M.'s Picnic?"

This is the perfect lead-in to tell you that we have set June 7 for **J.I.M.'s Picnic**. More information in future newsletters.