

# LAMENTATIONS

Issue 78

MIDDLE

Nov-Dec 2001

September 11, 2001

We will always remember where we were when we heard of the tragedies of this day. We will always remember the families who lost loved ones in the World Trade Centers, the Pentagon, and all those fallen heroes who were in the airplanes. This tragedy has rocked our nation and the entire world.

As I watched our nation grieve, I felt that "those" who have not suffered the loss of a child will now have a better understanding of our grief. They can now have some comprehension of how our world has been "shattered" and how we are trying to "rebuild," howbeit ever so slowly.

Just as this tragedy will be a defining date in our history, the date(s) of our child(ren)'s death is a defining date for us. I will always remember where I was on September 11, 2001, as I will always remember where I was when I was told of Young Jim's death. And since May 20, 1991, my world is divided; **before** Young Jim's death and **after** his death. There was an "innocence" that was lost by all of us. None of us will ever be the same, nor should we. I hope we become better people.

President Bush has asked that our country get back to "normal." As I watched the collapse of the World Trade Center Towers, I felt that the way it imploded symbolized the grief I felt when told of Young Jim's death.

**Implode** means to *collapse inward violently*. Does that express your grief and the way others view us after the death(s) of our child(ren)? Our body, like the shell of a building, is still there, but our very **essence** (*the intrinsic or indispensable properties that serve to characterize or identify something; the most important ingredient; the crucial element*) has **collapsed** (*to fall down or inward suddenly; cave in; to break down suddenly in strength or health and thereby cease to function*).

How do we get back to "normal"? **Normal** is *the usual or expected state. Lacking observable abnormalities or deficiencies. Conforming with, adhering to, or constituting a norm, standard, pattern, level, or type. Free from emotional disorder. Not deviating from what is common, usual, or to be expected. Adherence to an established standard, model, or pattern. Typical stresses adherence to those qualities, traits, or characteristics that identify a kind, group, or category.*

The twin towers of the World Trade Centers are gone and, to me, it is now holy ground. Many of the citizens of New York feel that it should become a memorial to those who have died, and I agree. It is important that our loved ones be remembered, as the families of the tragedies feel, and it means so much to us when we "memorialize" our children and others "celebrate" with us. This may be in any form from balloon releases to the domes at the Cumberland Inn and the Rollins Fine Arts Center (Thanks to

Luther and Rosemary Smith). We want others to share with us, celebrate with us, accept us and try to understand us. We Are Not Normal!! We have lost a child... We Will Never Be Normal Again!!!

We can never return to the old "normal" again. However, from the definitions of **normal**, we can get back to a certain state of **normalcy**. We, grieving parents, fellow travelers, can find some normalcy because we do have typical stresses which are adherent to those qualities, traits, or characteristics that identify a kind, group, or category. We are fellow travelers, and that is a group I thank God for each day. It is a comfort to know that I have all of you who truly understand, or as Becky Greer says, "who get it!"

This holiday season will be difficult for us as it will be for our nation. May we find a way of celebrating the things for which we are thankful. Thank you for all of your support and, in turn, I hope I have I cant support to you. Charlie Walton's book entitled **When There Are No Words** expresses my feelings about you and the tragedy of our nation. And when there are no words, all we can do is give a hug. I encourage each of you to hug as many people as you can this holiday season. You can begin by duplicating the gift I have sent you and give to others.

HUGS AND KISSES TO ALL!!

## Grief Grafts

Lillian Cox's son, Darren (12-21-65), completed suicide 6-25-98. Lillian wrote the following letter 12-25-00:

*Today is Darren's birthday. I am trying to find some comfort in my memories, but I have blocked so much since the divorce from his Dad, that it also includes some I wish I had now.*

*Why is it we have to wait until this time in our lives to realize all the things we could have done differently, when our children were younger? Regrets? Yes, I have a few... a lot to be exact.*

*I know I am rambling. I do that a lot anymore. I turned 68 yesterday and up until this year, age was just a number, but all of a sudden (or maybe not) I feel old.*

*But one thing has not changed, I will get up each day and do the best with it that I can. We are a lot tougher than we give ourselves credit for and probably still have depths we have not reached.*

*We are survivors, and if life is just for the "lessons learned," this is the hardest one and the one I would have liked to have done without.*

Lillian wrote this in July:

*When does the joy come back?*

*You know the joy you feel when you see a sunrise, a sunset, a rainbow, a flower blooming, and a waterfall.*

*You know the joy you feel when you look into a child's face.*

*That joy you feel when you see something of yourself or of your child in a grandchild.*

*The joy of that teenage grandchild coming for a visit, sharing with you some of their precious time in their busy lives.*

*The joy when you see your grown children, tall and straight, together, remembering old times; laughing, teasing and getting along.*

*The joy of spending time with your sister (or brother). The two of you, the only members of your family left.*

*The joy of a friend coming by unexpectedly (or expectedly).*

*That joy that comes from just being alive.*

*The smell of morning coffee, the birds singing.*

*The joy of completing a chore and the pride of finishing something.*

*When does that JOY come back?????  
OR DOES IT???????????????*

This original poem's author is unknown, but Lillian revised it 10-25-98:

*I have tried really hard not to say that life is unfair,*

*I have tried really hard not to say "Why me?"*

*I have tried really hard not to blame the Lord,*

*I have tried really hard to understand what happened was not God's, mine, his friend's or family's fault,*

*I have tried really hard to understand "free will,"*

*I have tried really hard to realize and live with never knowing "Why?"*

*I have tried really hard to work through the pain,*

*I have tried really hard to stay focused on living,*

*I have tried really hard to find a purpose and some sense out of life,*

*I have tried really hard to keep guilt, anger, hate, and bitterness out of my life,*

*I have tried really hard to understand the difference in people and how they handle things,*

*I have tried really hard to be strong, supportive and helpful to others,*

*I have tried really hard to understand that people do not know what to say or how to say it,*

*I have tried really hard, but sometimes that is not enough.*

Darren's symbol is a feather



Anthony and Tammy Krohn's son, Michael (11-13-84), died in an auto accident 7-9-00. The following lamentation was written by Tammy:

*I really don't know what to say, I do want to thank you for always being there and not forgetting our son, Michael that means so much!*

*July 9th, was one year, but it still seems like it just happened for me. I try really hard to keep going because I know that is what Mike would want. Michael was our only child. He would have been 16 four months after the accident.*

*I still can't make any sense out of any of it. He touched everyone he met in a special way. The lids he was friends with still come by a lot and they got together at school and made a large cross with Mike and Cory's names and photos and placed it where the accident happened.*

*Tony and I have been together since we were 16 & 17, 20 years now. We had Mike two years after we were married. He has always been the center of our world and now we just don't know what to do. How do you go on when someone takes the light out of your life? I know no one has the answers.*

*Mike had been wanting to go to the Kentucky Kingdom Amusement Park with this family that lived down the street from us for a while, but we always said, "no." But this time when he asked he said, "just this once he was going to be 16 and we couldn't always keep him home." So we made the plans.*

*At the last minute the mother and the youngest child decided not to go, so Mike, Cory and his dad went, they never made it there.*

*The police report said he swerved to keep from hitting another car and crossed the center lane. They all 3 died instantly. We were told it was a freak accident.*

*We chose not to press charges because the mother and youngest son lost too much. She still has to raise him without his father and brother.*

*No amount of money can change this. The only thing that can is for us to have Mike back and we know we can't. People say that we should have sued, but they just don't realize it won't change anything.*

*I really could write forever about Mike and how I feel but I guess I should close for now. Thank you for listening.*

Michael's symbols are a yellow tiger, a butterfly, rollerblades and a music symbol.



John and Geneane Blanton's daughter, Samantha (6-13-86), died after being struck by a car 5-28-93. The following was written by Sabrina, Samantha's twin sister:

*Hi, this is Sabrina Blanton. I was writing to tell you that we appreciate your support for the loss of my sister Samantha for the past 9 years. I don't know what we would have done without you.*

*I dread it, but then again look forward to May 28th because that's when she died and went to a new home where she will have no troubles or worries and that is heaven*

*Every day I wonder what it would be like with her here with us. How would she act and even what she would look like? Next month on June 13th would be our 15th birthday and I know she would have loved to turn "15."*

*I feel sorry for my mom because she has to watch me celebrate my birthday without Samantha. Words can't even begin to explain what and how I feel about her.*

Samantha's symbol is a



Roberta Clark's son, Larry (5-2-53), died in an auto accident 6-29-73. Roberta wrote:

*Thanks so much for the packet you sent me. I'm so sorry about your son. My son, Larry, was also killed in a car accident at age 20. He lived two weeks after the accident. He died from internal injuries.*

*Larry was quite a boy, my middle child My daughter, Donna, was born April 4, 1951. Larry came along two years later on may 2, 1953, and six years later Ruby was born April 8, 1959.*

*I went through all the emotions I imagine all parents go through, the "what ifs;" and guilt feelings. Larry didn't go to college. He worked at Winn Dixie in the warehouse and wanted to drive a truck when he reached age 21. He was very independent and moved out on his own a year before his accident. That is one of my "ifs;" I felt it might not have happened if he had been living at home.*

*My husband of almost 50 years passed away June 2, 2000, of congestive heart failure. I'm alone for the first time in my life. Death has been a part of my life as I was the youngest of 11 children There are only 2 of us left. I have been blessed with fairly good health I also have 5 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren*

*Even though it has been almost 28 years since his death, I still miss him and feel like a part of me is gone.*

Larry's symbol is an angel



Sarah Sneed's son, Matthew (2-25-94), died from an aneurysm 7-22-98.

In a card received from Sarah for the 2000 holidays she shared:

*I was wondering how you finally reached this point, where you spend so much of your time helping others?*

*Our children are not the only angels, you're standing in the middle of them. You have to be a truly wonderful lady.*

*I know these holidays are as difficult for you as the rest of us, let me say, I remember you always in my prayers. Always know that some of us are so totally absorbed in our own grief (especially me, I apologize), that we don't correspond as we should, but your newsletter and you are deeply appreciated*

*When all the people go home a week after the funeral, their lives go on They forget that for the remainder of our days here we are alone and in a lot of pain. I've been asked multiple times already about why my tree isn't up and what my plans are for Christmas. Why can't people understand it's because a knife is inserted in my heart with each ornament placed on the tree. The holidays are for children, and my baby celebrates in Heaven I can't see his sparkling eyes or the heavenly music we all call laughter. When asked what I want, there's only one thing and I can't have it. Material things don't matter, I want the most precious gift back I try very hard to keep my fake smile intact through this time, but it's extremely difficult to hide the water falls from my eyes.*

*Anyway, I didn't write you to complain, I wanted to thank you for everything Especially being you!*

The following letter was written before J.I.M.'s Picnic 2001 by Sarah:

*I wanted to wish you the best at the picnic and thank you for the invitation*

*I still haven't been able to bring myself to deal with groups of people, so I won't be attending, but I will keep you in my prayers.*

*Happy Mother's Day to you, although knowing your situation I'm sure it will be spent like mine and many others. Your newsletter was very helpful. There were some great pointers on how to survive these ever trying times. Sometimes I still forget I'm not alone, probably because in part, I keep separated from the "living" world It's really difficult to feel like part of anything these days. Anyway, I wanted to say once a mother always a mother.*

*There are no childless mothers, only a temporary separation Your son is still with you and one day will be in your arms again. Once we've experienced hat kind of love, it can never be taken away. The pain we feel now is only due to experiencing the greatest love his world can know. I wouldn't trade places with anyone except maybe one who will never know what this pain is. I would much rather feel this heartache, than never to have felt the love.*

Matman's symbols are the Batman emblem and a cherub with golden wings and hair.



Dale and Marlene Stokes' son, Darren (7-22-65), committed suicide, 3-31-86. Darren was their only child. Marlene shared:

*Dale and I find we celebrate the holidays with a certain degree of excitement. The joy is diminished and our life will never be the same, care-free, fun, nor can enjoy friends and family.*

*I have a harder time with the death date than any other time. Darren will be gone 15 years this coming March 31, 2001 the month of our anniversary.*

*When I must acknowledge once again that Darren's life passes still another year deeper into the mists of what has been.*

*I am afraid I will forget his voice. I know I will never forget his looks, walk, etc., but the voice is harder to hold onto.*

*I sincerely hope that this year is better and easier for you both.*

Darren's symbol is a deer.



Billy and Trish Barton's son, Michael (12-5-63), died 4-3-96. Trish sent a card and explained:

This card reminds me of Michael -

Wildlife and the star is like a promise that one day we will be together.



Michael's symbols are a duck in flight, an elk bulging, a fish jumping, a horse running and Michael the Archangel

Bobby and Linda Parsons' daughter, Teresa Parsons Adams (6-10-69), was killed in an auto accident by a drunk driver 2-4-00. Linda described Tressa's life:

*We were expecting our first and only child and my husband wanted a boy real bad. So bad he painted the room blue. When this beautiful little girl was born June 10, 1969, everything changed. He was so proud of her. He would come in from work at all hours of the night and wake her up to play. Then I was the one to get her to sleep again. As she got older he read to her, took her with him to the store, he took her everywhere. She was a cheerleader, band member and in all the clubs that she could be in. In high school she helped start the FLO Party, it was against drinking and driving and this party was held after the prom.*

*She was happily married and had a stepson. She had a degree in Psychology and Sociology. She went back to school to get her teaching degree. She was able to teach Regular Ed., Special Ed., Deaf & Hard Hearing. Teresa loved helping people. She had everything planned so well; she had been to the doctor to*

*be sure everything was OK before they planned their family.*

*We had ate out with her and her husband on Thursday evening. She was laughing and telling us about her children at school, she taught at Clay City Elementary.*

*The next day she called me as she was coming home from school. They had gotten out early because of snow.*

*Later she called me again at work about 10 till 5; she was ready to go to Richmond to get her hair cut. The roads were clear. I thought everything was OK.*

*I went home from work and my husband called to see if I had talked to her, then her husband called and asked the same thing! He said she hadn't made it to Richmond and that there had been a bad wreck on Richmond*

*Road. I told him I would find her. My brother went with me. When we got there the road was blocked, the wreck was terrible. I ran to where it was, but they grabbed me and said I didn't need to see it. They told me, "we're sorry but she had died instantly. We're still not sure what happened but a drunk driver was involved." The guy had tried to run others off the road earlier and after the wreck he tried to run away. He had lots of DUI's against him and many other charges.*

*"My baby didn't have a chance." We had wondered what would happen in the year 2000, but we weren't prepared for this.*

*The next day some friends of hers got a poem on their Email from her entitled, "When Tomorrow Starts Without Me." The first time that I heard it was when it was read at her funeral. Channel 18 called me and came to film the funeral for TV that night. They are still updating about the other driver,*

*Ross, who is in jail. He was given 6 years in prison. His family can still see him and after that he will be back with them, we will never see Tressa again on this earth. We had to close the casket for Teresa's funeral.*

*Everyone loved Teresa, she was a people person. The school and the bank where I work closed for the funeral. The of the viewing people stood in line until the funeral home closed. The next day after*

*the funeral some friends went to the river and threw flower petals in the water. Teresa loved the river; that was where they spent their weekends. Our lives will never be the same. Without the support of our church, family and friends, life would be impossible.*

Teresa's symbols are a heart, angel and a smiley face



Roland and Deborah San Gil's son, Ryan (1-6-83), died while attending soccer camp 7-21-99.

Deborah tells us about other adjustments since Ryan's death:

*Ryan's full name is: Ryan Edward Torres San Gil. Ryan was born on 6, January 1983, in Fayetteville, North Carolina. He died on 21, July 1999, at the age of 16, in Eastern Kentucky.*

*We haven't really thought of a symbol for him. Although, it is quite apparent in our household that we purchase picture frames containing soccer balls ...so perhaps the soccer ball may be a symbol for him. Ryan passed away while attending soccer camp.*

*One of the next significant events that will affect us is Ryan's high school class graduating this year (Class of 2001). There seems this other finality about this upcoming event... the connection between the high school and us will be severed. . .*

*We observed the 1st anniversary of Ryan's death in July. Once again, those were difficult, but having family around helped us tremendously. We still make our weekly Sunday visits to the cemetery, after the 8:00 AM mass, to visit Ryan's gravesite. We attended several meetings with The Compassionate Friends during the year, we find it helps us. It's not easy but we are surviving.*

Ryan's symbol is a soccer-ball.

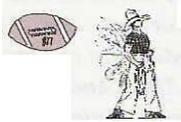


Michael (6-30-76), the son of Michael and Linda Miller, died from a truck accident, 2-15-95. The following letter of invitation was sent to their friends and family Christmas 2000.

We hope all of you will join us again this year in remembering all the children who have died in years past by lighting a candle on Sunday December 10, at 7:00 PM Just imagine a wave of light moving around the globe as candles are lit in each and every time zone.

Such a simple gesture will let Michael Duncan's light continue to shine.

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



Wanda Wehunt's son, Todd (8-23-73), died in an auto accident 8-31-00. Wanda wrote about Todd:

*I have finally been able to put in words a short story about my son, Todd.*

*On August 23, 1973, my little red headed son was born. After 10 hours of labor, I quickly realized that this little boy was going to march to the beat of a different drummer. During his entrance into this world, he decided to try and be born sideways. It took many doctors, nurses, and exploring medical students to finally get this little boy turned around in the correct position. He had gorgeous red hair and beautiful blue eyes.*

*He was my baby and I knew he would be my last child, but now I had all I wanted; one girl, Angie, Todd's older sister by 3 years and now my baby boy. The American Dream. Little did I know how hard it would be to hold onto that dream.*

*Todd was a very individual kid. There were many things that set him apart from other kids. One was his red hair; another was that he was small. At different times of his life, he tried very hard to change both. Another was his tenderheartedness and compassion, which he didn't try to change.*

*During his childhood days, he took part in sports that accommodated his size. Scouts, church activities, t-ball, soccer and many more. He insisted on wearing the number 10 on his soccer shirt in honor of his hero "Pele." He started playing soccer at the age of 6 until age of 14. We all had big dreams of him being seen by a soccer scout and getting into a*

*good college on a soccer scholarship. He also advanced in scouting and was working on Eagle Scout. He loved Star Wars, Super Man, his Green Machine and his red Schwinn bike. He had a 4-wheeler, which was popular at the time and later a small motorcycle.*

*Unfortunately, at the age of 14 he also began experimenting with drugs and alcohol. Coming from an addictive family, Todd became addicted himself, almost immediately. Most of the rest of his life he fought a horrible fight against this terrible monster. He was in many hospitals and much intervention; sometimes helping, sometimes not.*

*Bui for about 7 years prior to his death, he was clean. Those of us who knew him, loved him for the friendly, compassionate young man he was. He loved helping people and would give away almost anything in order to do so. Material things really were not important to him. Todd worked as a graphic designer and thoroughly enjoyed working on his computer. His passion was tinkering on his old VW bus and he absolutely loved skateboarding!*

*During this time, he met a young woman with a baby girl named Kezia, all of three months old. Kezia became the new love and passion of his life and he became the father that was missing in hers. He loved her with a devotion he had never before experienced in his life.*

*Tragically, the monster returned during the last year before Todd died. He turned back to drugs. We'll never know all the reasons why. Possibly because his wife was fighting demons of her own and the pressure was too much for either of them. Ultimately, she left him and his precious little girl was taken away to live with her maternal grandparents. Because of drugs, Todd lost virtually everything he had.*

*We never stopped loving him though and praying for him. I saw him 5 months before he died, and talked to him on the phone only 1 week before he died. Each time I was privileged to tell him how much I loved him, and that I would always be there for him. He also told me how much he loved me, and that he was sorry. Those were our last words to each other.*

*On August 31, 2000, I was told by my daughter Angie that my precious Todd had died in a car accident.*

*Every Thursday and every 31st reminds me especially of that day; the day my heart broke in two and will never be the same.*

*Nevertheless, I believe you do have to go through sorrow to get to the joy. And even though the night is long, I hold on to God's promise in the Bible that "joy comes in the morning."*

*My Todd is now an angel and will always live in my heart and the hearts of many others for the rest of our earthly lives.*

Todd's symbols are a skateboarder with angel wings and a VW bus.



Jim and Jean Richardson's daughter, Jan (10-6-53), died as a result of leukemia 6-9-99. Their son, Joe (11-13-51), died from a melanoma 8-4-00 and their daughter, Jan (10-6-53), died from leukemia 6-9-99. Jean describes their loss of two children:

*I am slowly making my way through each page of the newsletters and I know that we are not alone in our grief*

*We attended our first meeting of Compassionate Friends in February, 2001. Becky LeVay told me you had spoken to the group in January. I am so sorry we didn't know about this wonderful organization sooner. I had even contacted Hospice of the Bluegrass and they didn't mention TCF.*

*We lost two beautiful adult children within a fourteen month period.*

*Our daughter, Jan Cecile Richardson, was diagnosed with leukemia (AML) in November, 1995. She lived in Lake County, IL and was employed by Abbott Labs as Manager, Clinical Research. She has two daughters (our beautiful granddaughters), Jessica Lauren was then 12 and Jennifer Leigh, 8 years old at the time of their mother's death. They are now 14 and 10 living with their father in Michigan.*

*We cared for Jan and the girls because she was in the hospital so much of the time. Jan was born October 6, 1953, and passed away June 9, 1999. After*

she passed, the father stepped in and took the girls to Traverse City, MI to live. Not only did we lose Jan, but we lost the girls. We get to see them occasionally; but we have to pick them up in Michigan which is about a 12 hour drive. Our hearts break for the way they are being reared. Jan was a vivacious, loving person and a wonderful mother to Jessica and Jennifer. She was also a little mischievous and always up for a good giggle.

Jan's symbol is the Celtic Cross, as she loved Scotland.

We had just gotten Jan's home vacated and sold in October of 1999, when our son Joe had a recurrence of Malignant Melanoma. He was first diagnosed in November, 1991. He went to Duke Medical Center for treatment and was in remission for eight years.

We left the Chicago area after selling Jan's home and stopped by Lexington for a change of clothes and went directly to Charleston, SC to be with Joe, as he was having surgery. They found a "wad" (doctor's description) of lymph nodes encased in the black melanoma. He and Karen were able to spend Christmas with us here in Lexington which was Joe's one wish. In January, 2000, the tumors spread to the adrenals. From there it spread quickly. He lived fairly comfortably until just a few weeks before he passed on, August 4, 2000.

Joe was born November 13, 1951. He was married to Karen Smith who was a wonderful wife and daughter-in-law. They lived in Goose Creek, SC and had no children. Joe was a quiet person but he loved to talk politics and go fishing. Joe's symbol is a fishing lure. As I said before, Jan was the mischievous one and was always causing Joe grief Jan and Joe were only two years apart and they were very close.

We have one living son, James, Jr. who is 37 years old and very healthy. James is divorced, but has a wonderful lady friend and a new puppy. He has no children. On top of losing his sister and brother, he lost his eleven year old Cairn Terrier, "Bandit," November 29, 2000. He was devastated, but a new puppy, another

Cairn Terrier named Teddy, has helped a little bit. He is a great young man, also living in Lake County, IL.

Jan's symbol is the Celtic cross and Joe's symbol is a fishing lure.



Jim and Elaine Madden's son, Andrew (9-26-78), died after an accidental overdose 3-6-95. Elaine shared:

My husband, Jim and I attended a book signing at Books & Company in Dayton, Ohio last year where we were privileged to meet Rosemary. We both read "Children of the Dome" and have enjoyed your newsletter over the months.

I am enclosing a little book we self published after the death of our son, Andrew. Andy wrote this little book and they are the exact drawings as he made them.

The following article was published in the Lifestyle section of Dayton Daily News about the little book. Written by Meredith Moss, entitled: "Teen leaves behind message of friendship"

A story of five pigs is told by teenager whose family had it published.

It's a sweet story with an important message. And the love behind its publication is moving as well.

When he was 15, Andy Madden wrote a little story called, "A Pig's Tale."

It's a story "about friendship and belonging" that focuses on five pigs. One little guy doesn't play with the rest because his skin is lighter than theirs and he feels left out.

When he accidentally falls in the mud, he suddenly realized it's the dirt that has made the other pigs a different color.

"From that day on, until the ripe age of thirty, the pigs had fun, played games and got dirty," the story concludes.

Tragically, the story's author did not reach a ripe old age like his hero Andy, living with his family in Pennsylvania, died suddenly March 16, 1995, at the age of 16 after taking a prescribed medication.

"It was in large part due to the help of my sister, Trudy Kimsey, who left her life in Dayton to stay with us through the following months, that we were able to hold together," says Andy's mother, Elaine Madden, who, with her husband, Jim eventually decided to move back to Dayton to be near family.

Andy's brother, Pat, is 21. Jim Madden works as a drug and alcohol counselor at the Monday Correctional Institution in Dayton.

After Andy's death, the family found many things Andy had written - an adventure novel, essays, poems, and decided to publish, "A Pig's Tale."

"The story tells us something about this young man, his humor, his sense of searching and his compassion," says his mom. Andy's book is lovingly offered in his memory and dedicated to the child in all of us who has searched for friendship and belonging.

"We have felt as a family that in offering Andy's book to others we have honored Andy and his creativity. And that in honoring him we somehow are able to continue on our grief journey. We miss him terribly."

The book, which sells for \$4.50, is available at Books & Co. at 350 E. Stroop Road, and at Angel Heaven, 11 N Main St., in West Milton.

By coincidence, Mrs. Madden had written a story for a Pennsylvania newspaper months before Andy's death about a support group for bereaved parents and siblings called, The Compassionate Friends.

That group, first in Pennsylvania and now in the Miami Valley has helped the Maddens.

"There is always a gift waiting for those who go to a meeting," Mrs. Madden has written. "At The Compassionate Friends these parents and siblings can cry together, sometimes laugh and admit feeling anger and even despair without the fear of judgment. They are with others who understand their loss, because they have experienced it."

"For these parents and siblings get to speak their dead child's name and hear the names of the other children of those who sit in this circle of grief they speak these names with love and determination that their loved ones will not be forgotten by others."

She encourages others who are hurting to attend local meetings or contact one of these resources.

Andrew's symbol is a "luck angel" that he drew and used as his signature.



David and Janet Piver's daughter, Leanna (11-16-78), died in an automobile accident 11-7-98. Janet tells about Leanna's song:

*What is an Angel? To us, it was a child full of love and compassion for others, one who brought joy and happiness into our lives, as well as anyone she came in contact with. Her name is Leanna, and she was our oldest daughter. Leanna was killed in an automobile accident in November 1998, at the age of twenty.*

*She was a loving daughter, a wonderful sister, an athlete, a deans list student, a cheerleader, a performer, and a wonderful friend to all she met. The pain, hurt and, yes, sometimes anger that comes with her loss can never be put into words, because we had truly lost our Angel on earth.*

*On the saddest day of our lives, as Leanna left this world, one of her friends, Erick Bennet, quietly brought us a tape of a song he had written in Leanna's memory. As we sat in the hospital, waiting for the life support team to prepare her organs for donation, we listened to Erick's song. The words he had written seemed to capture the emotion and thoughts of all of us who had kept a week-long vigil in hopes of a miracle. Because there was a bigger plan for Leanna, it was time for us to return her to The Lord. Leanna's Song, as it is called, brought tears of joy, a sense of understanding and great comfort to all who listened to the words. Erick was able to provide us with a way to always remember the memory of our Leanna. He also reminded us that our days on this earth are precious, and that one day we will meet again.*

*Since Leanna passed away, the song written by Erick Bennett, has been a part of our daily lives. As we join hands with family and friends to listen and sing this song, we realize that Leanna was truly an*

*angel here on earth, whose task had been completed. She was taken home to perform a greater role in Heaven. Although she is no longer physically with us, we feel her presence every day and we truly believe that we have been "Touched By Our Own Angel," an Angel who has taught us love.*

*"Leanna's Song" has helped us through this difficult time in our lives, because of the message it conveys. Not only does it help us to keep her memory alive, but it has also helped others deal with the loss of a loved one.*

"Leanna's Song"

9-7-00

"I Guess This is Good-bye"

By Erick Bennett

*Take me with you, don't leave me lonely.  
I wasn't prepared to live without you.  
Memories are but gifts for the living, so  
when you see God, will you thank him for me?*

*My heart is breaking for you, I'm lost in  
the silence you left behind.  
But I will go to all your favorite places,  
I'll never forget the time we had, I'll keep  
your picture with me, someday I'll meet  
you in the sky.*

*But until then, I guess this is good-bye. I  
miss you, my friend, feels like you're with  
me.*

*I see you each night when I close my  
eyes.*

*Though you're not here, I know you're  
still smiling that smile just as bright as  
ten million stars.*

*How can you be gone so soon?*

*All the wonderful things I've planned for  
you..*

*But I will go to all your favorite places,  
I'll never forget the time we had, I'll keep  
your picture with me, someday I'll meet  
you in the sky.*

*But until then, I guess this is good-bye.*

*The whole world is quiet, I hear your  
voice whisper and promise that you'll be  
thinking of me.*

*Inside I know you're somewhere singing  
the songs that we sang not so long ago.*

*My heart is breaking for you, I'm lost in  
the silence you left behind.*

*But I will go to all your favorite places,  
I'll never forget the time we*

*had, I'll keep your picture with me,  
someday I'll meet you in the sky.  
But until then, I guess this is good-bye.  
I guess this is good-bye.*

Leanna's symbols are a white dove and yellow ribbon.



Mike and Edna Dishon's daughter, Jessica (5-2-82), was abducted and murdered 9-10-99. Edna wrote:

*Jessica would now be 19 (she was 17 at the time of her death) was abducted from our driveway as she was leaving for school. Jessica was found 17 days later beaten and strangled.*

*Jessica was born in 1982. At the time of her birth I never thought I would outlive her. When she was born she was so perfect; her hair was dark brown, her eyes blue, she was the perfect body weight and everything.*

*Through the years she grew and became more of her own little person. She was always picking up books reading them, even though she could not read. She loved to sit for hours with paper and pencil and try to write. All through her school years she always did remarkably well. Year after year she received many awards, which means more to me now than when she first received them. While in 5th grade she got a "Presidential award" from President Clinton she always made me proud.*

*When she was 15 she bought her first car working nights at a local fast food restaurant while going to school during the day. She had to save for over a year to buy that first car. By the next year she had saved up enough money to buy the car of her dreams a red 1996 Sun fire and was she ever proud of that car!*

*Jessica was a very independent and dependable young lady. She would ride her brothers around, taking them places all the time. And, although Jessica made a few mistakes and wrong choices in her life, that does not bother me as much as her not being able to be here to learn and correct those choices.*

*I know that Jessica now watches over us and some day we will all be a family again.*

*Rest in Peace. We love and miss you and you will never be forgotten. We remember Jessica with a rose, an angel and a butterfly.*

### When I Must Leave You

*When I must leave you for a little while  
Please do not grieve and shed wild tears  
And hug your sorrow to you through the years  
But start out bravely with a gallant smile;  
And for my sake and in my name live on and do all things the same,  
Feed not your loneliness on empty days,  
But fill each waking hour in useful ways,  
Reach out your hand in comfort and in cheer  
And I in turn will comfort you and hold you near;  
And never, never be afraid to die,  
For I am waiting for you in the sky!*

Jessica's symbols are an angel, rose and a butterfly.



Yenna Yi's son, Stevaki Che (3-26-70), died as a result of suicide 4-23-90. Yenna tells of her inner growth:

*I have done my pilgrimage and this year, for the first time, I was able to write about it. I am including that piece. I also include the piece I wrote earlier (The Words).*

*I found differences and hopefully that reflects my inner growth.*

### "The Land"

*I am driving again on the same road,  
Rt. 7, Rt. 103, 191 to Amherst, like I have done dozens of times past 11 years.  
31 years ago we were together, a new-born baby boy and a new mother.  
I came here to look for words to say and hear, "So it is!"  
You are not here to say, you are not here to hear, but the land  
The faithful land that holds the inscription,*

*That hold the crab apple tree with your name.*

*I walked on the grass in the town square again,  
Smelling the early spring air.  
The relentless traffic hummed, the meter man was vigilant in his duty.*

*The flower man said, "The usual?"  
I obligingly responded with a nod and smile.  
He pulled out three flowers, one yellow, one pink and one purple.  
I held the flowers like a baby.*

*The block on the ground was barely visible.  
I removed the snow. Green algae found home.  
Someone left two roses. Still wrapped in paper under the snow. "Happy Birthday!"  
The spring. The land.  
The land holds my tears, cries, joys and laughter.  
I came to hear it again. The cries and laughter.  
I came to feel it again. The joys and tears.  
I am the land. I hold you, your laughter and pain.*

*I am the land where I travel to seek the truth.  
The meter man is still vigilant. He waves as I get into my car. The journey. The words.  
My flesh has become the language. I am the land.*

27 March, 01, Amherst, MA.

### WORDS

*Words are soul's pulses  
Made of tears and flesh  
That speak my heart  
Your heart, everybody's heart.  
Breathe words into life  
Life is cast into words  
Words to thought are  
Like winds to sail, said Heidegger. Keep words well trimmed to thought Simple, honest, and true  
Sail stays close to wind  
Ship keeps her course.  
Common words, special words  
Words of love, words of wisdom  
Words to be saved by  
Words to tell stories with.  
I have denied the gift*

*Placing feelings in parentheses Period before my heart  
Displaced by the rules of grammar.  
Truth lingers  
A word about my son  
The sudden death that came uninvited  
To tear him away from me  
No parentheses big enough for the Five-Lettered-word-D EAT H  
A word of truth, I still do not know why.  
The cry echoed  
Rippling across the field of dandelions  
Brooks murmured, stars were wordless Clouds hung low.  
How do I own these words  
That destroyed me  
That broke my heart  
That turned my heart to stone?  
How do you teach a stone to speak?  
To rise above to flood,  
To walk the bridge,  
And to cry and sing.  
There was no blood  
When my flesh was cut away  
Dry tears filled the air  
Wordless, in silence.  
Written by  
Yenna Yi  
Pendle Hill*

August '99

Stevaki Che's symbol is a tropical bird.



Linda Foley's son, Aaron (12-22-98), died in sleep 7-23-00. Linda writes:

*I lost my youngest child July 23, 2000. He died at home in his sleep. He had asthma. His name is Aaron Justin Foley. Aaron was 19 months old when he died. Aaron was born with a muscle disease. This disease was not deadly. It was Hypnotic Muscle Disease. Aaron's muscles were not strong enough to protect his bones so he was very easily prone to broken bones. Aaron was a very happy baby, he smiled all the time and he never met a stranger. He loved Elmo, and cars/trucks. Before he died he had just learned how to make a car/truck sound, not to mention he knew how to dance also. He'd move back and forth and swing his hips. He was something special.*

Aaron also loved his older brother Joshua. Joshua is 5 today. When Aaron died, a part of me died also. There were days I didn't think I was going make it. Joshua is what helped me, plus friends and family.

I was always raised up in church so I knew enough about God to know that you don't question Him. But I couldn't help not to. I just wanted to say, "why, God? Why not me, Aaron hasn't got to live his life." But I knew in my heart deep, deep down, that God took Aaron home for a reason.

I finally was able to attend my first Compassionate Friends meeting on February 6, 2001. It took so much strength to get the first word out, but I did and it felt good to talk about Aaron to other parents who knew my pain, and understood if I cried.

I have a new best friend and I believe you know her. Her name is, Jolene Hutchinson. I don't know what I would've done without her love and support and friendship.

There are days that I raise up out of bed and put my feet on the floor to get up, but then I realize. Aaron's gone and I end up back in bed. But Josh always comes in there and reminds me with his precious smile that I still have a reason and a purpose to be here. For Aaron's birthday, which was December 22, we put two roses on his grave because he turned two and for Christmas we put a small decorated Christmas tree plant beside his head stone.

Aaron's smile could light up a dark room. He'd watch cartoons of the mornings with Josh and sit there and dance and laugh and enjoy it.

He'd give us 40 kisses a day I bet. We taught him how to give kisses and after that he'd give you kisses all day. He loved going for rides in the car or walks. And McDonald's, man could he ever eat some fries. He'd go, "mmmm." Aaron/Josh were and still are my life. Aaron is and was precious and God gave me him for a year and a half and I thank him so much for the time that we all had

The night of the funeral I asked God to let Aaron come to me or give me a sign that it's O.K. to let go. I guess it was around 3:30 in the morning I woke up by the breeze that felt like it just

went right over my head Well, of course, I woke up instantly and looked around I had been sleeping in the living room because I couldn't stand to walk past the boy's room. So on the mantle I had a lot of cards, flowers and a picture of Aaron sitting there. I got up looking around and Aaron's picture was on the floor. There were probably 6 or 7 cards and 9 or 10 flowers in the living room maybe more, but the only thing that had been knocked to the floor was Aaron's picture. I picked it up and looked at it and it was like his smile just kept growing bigger and bigger. I felt peace in my heart.

Then one morning I was dreaming that Aaron was standing beside me by the bed. I woke up at exactly 7:23. I looked at my clock and it was 7:23. Aaron died 7-23-00. The 23rd of this month will be 7 months that I haven't got to hold him or touch him or do all my motherly things that I got to do at one point in time, and on days I feel like I am not going to make it.

Aaron was a special baby and I'll never forget all his gestures, his smile, his cry. When Aaron was still here if he saw me crying, or I guess he could sense a problem with mom, he'd come up to put his head on my lap and smack his lips to give me kisses. I miss him so much! He'd look at me and start pat-a-caking or playing peek-a-boo.

The following was a memorial to Aaron.

*In Loving Memory of  
Aaron Justin Foley*

*In a blink of an eye, you were taken away.*

*Off to a better place and a brighter day.*

*At this moment we all feel pain and ask why did our precious Aaron have to be taken away.*

*But the only way it can be explained to all of us who loved Aaron so, is that Jesus needed a baby to hold, so the good Lord took our Aaron home.*

Aaron's symbol is a baby angel.

Christopher Faller (5-7-90), the son of Ron and Maria, died from viral complications from a piggyback heart transplant, 3-24-98. Maria shared about brave Christopher!

## A Statue for Christopher

*This is the extraordinary story of a little boy who refused to give up in the face of impossible odds; who instead brought joy and inspiration to others.*

*This is the story of a little boy who flourished in the love of his family and in his love of God. The story of my courageous son, Christopher.*

Chris was born on May 7, 1990, and the doctors said he was perfectly healthy. Three days later he wouldn't wake up, and we rushed him to our pediatrician. We were told Christopher probably wouldn't live another 30 minutes. Miraculously he survived and was taken by ambulance to Children's Hospital. A blood test showed no detectable level of glucose. IVs were started, and Chris woke up and seemed OK. The doctors postulated that Chris had a viral infection while still in the womb and was too weak to fight it. The infection scarred Chris' heart, and he was diagnosed with restrictive cardiomyopathy.

Because his heart function was greatly reduced, fluid backed up into Chris' lungs, and he had to start a life-long course of strong diuretics. We had to change his soaking wet diapers up to four times in an hour.

There is no cure for restrictive cardiomyopathy. Chris would need a heart/lung transplant if he was to survive the first year. Already Chris showed what a fighter he was and came home after almost a month in the hospital. Somehow this tiny infant with a death sentence would grow into a loving and happy little boy. He seemed so happy with life that we would postpone the transplant as long as possible and spend every minute we could with Chris. He had to try harder to keep up with other kids, but never got discouraged nor felt sorry for himself. His only regret was that he wanted to be able to run really fast, at least once. But his weak heart would not let him.

*It took great determination and every ounce of his limited energy, but*

Chris went to kindergarten and first grade at Saint Sebastian's school.

The teachers at Saint Sebastian's were outstanding in the special care and love they gave to Chris and made him feel safe and happy. I am forever indebted to Sister Helen, Christopher's kindergarten teacher. She helped the other children realize Christopher's limitations and showed them how special he was. Sister Helen also opened Christopher's eyes to God, and he developed a deep faith for someone so young. Every day after kindergarten, Chris would kneel at the statue of the Blessed Mother and say a Hail Mary, regardless of the weather.

Despite being the smallest child in the school (his heart would not allow him to grow), all the other kids looked up to him because of the hospital visits he had to endure and his bright and cheerful personality. Mrs. Mac, Christopher's gym teacher, also made Chris feel special. Knowing that Chris could not keep up with the other kids, Mrs. Mac would find ways for Chris to participate. She knew that Chris' favorite pastime was building with Lego's, and to his delight, called him The Lego Kid. The year that Christopher was in Sister Helen's kindergarten class was the happiest year of his life.

Chris' heart grew progressively worse until Christmas 1996, when Chris came down with bronchitis. This was more than his heart could take, and Chris was unable to lie down without losing his breath. His doctors at Children's wanted to admit Chris, but I convinced his cardiologist to treat him as an outpatient. We had to call the doctor twice a day, and I had to take Chris to the hospital twice a week. Chris was unable to return to school until March, and he had lost the little stamina he had and was unable to take gym class or recess. Mrs. Bossong, Christopher's first grade teacher, sacrificed her lunch break each day, and let Chris pick two classmates to stay inside with him after lunch, while the other children had recess. Again, thanks to Mrs. Bossong, Chris was able to finish first grade and be with his friends.

Chris' heart never fully recovered and, even with higher doses of diuretics, fluid

was building up around his heart and his life was in more danger.

Still Chris continued to be happy and understood everything that was happening and could happen to him. We realized we had to begin preparations for a transplant. But a conventional heart transplant was not an option for Chris. His poorly pumping heart had caused pulmonary hypertension. While his own heart adapted to squeeze hard to force blood into his lungs, a new heart on its own would not be able to do the work immediately. Chris would probably die on the operating table. Surgeons decided his only hope was a heterotopic, or piggyback, transplant. Only about 20 American children have had the procedure, and Chris would only be the second child at Children's.

Doctors left his own heart in place and added the new heart to make it easier for his system to pump out the blood.

We explained all this to Christopher, and he understood more than any 7 year old should have to. Chris and I prayed fervently that he would not need the operation. When a donor was found, I asked his cardiologist to do one last chest X-ray to make certain we hadn't received our miracle. Chris' heart was not healed, and on October 8, 1997, Chris had his history-making transplant. Every day the children at the school prayed for Chris. Sister Helen came to visit Chris in the ICU at Children's Hospital, and Chris received the anointing for the sick. Chris was grateful for the many cards, gifts, and prayers he received.

Chris was in Children's Hospital for 3 weeks and amazed me and the doctors with his courage and strength as he recovered. For the first time in his life, Chris found out what it feels like to have energy. Once he was fully recovered he raced his 4 year old sister up the driveway, and Chris actually won a race. His wish to run really fast, at least once, finally came true.

Unfortunately, that brief moment was the only chance Chris would ever get. Soon after the transplant the doctors discovered that the donor heart carried the Epstein-Barr virus, a common virus in humans that causes mononucleosis. Because of the immune suppressant medication Chris had

to take to prevent rejection, he had no defense against this virus. This virus caused the horrible disease, post transplant Lymphoproliferative disease, or PTLD, that killed our wonderful little boy. By January 19, 1998, Christopher was back in Children's Hospital for treatment of PTLD. From the virus Chris had ulcers throughout his GL tract - from the esophagus to the stomach and into his small intestine. He also had tumors growing in his lungs. Even in pain and back in the hospital Chris never complained. When the doctors asked him how he felt, his answer was always the same, pretty good.

To treat the PTLD, they stop the patient's anti-rejection drugs and hope his awakened immune system attacks the PTLD and not the new heart. But soon Christopher was breathing too fast - he was having severe rejection. He had to take high dose steroids to fight the rejection. The doctors decided to do a lung biopsy to determine if it was truly PTLD in his lungs. Chris had to be heavily sedated and put on a ventilator for the biopsy. Something went wrong with the procedure, and on 2/3/98 they lost Christopher's pulse, and his two hearts stopped beating. Chris was resuscitated and seemed to be okay. Once again Chris had fought back from death. They tried chemotherapy to kill the large PTLD tumors growing in his chest, and he seemed to be getting better. Chris' beautiful blond hair fell out and his white blood count dropped to zero. Chris was exhausted but his spirit was very strong.

When asked how he felt, Chris would still respond, "pretty good."

The rapid breathing returned until one night, in a panic, Chris told me he couldn't breathe. The doctors and nurses waited all through the night before deciding to send Chris back to the ICU. They knew what a fighter he was and thought maybe he could get through it, but fate was against us. As they wheeled his bed to intensive care Chris held my hand and said Daddy, I

love you very much.

After struggling all that day Chris was put on the ventilator. On March 10, 1998, Christopher's hearts stopped again; he fought back again but ended up on a heart/lung machine. Then came a fungal infection, high fever, kidney failure, dialysis, and more chemotherapy. His last CT scan showed that his lungs were solid with virus-induced tumors. On March 24, 1998, Christopher's hearts beat out their unique rhythm for the last time, falling silent at 12:03 AM

On March 27, Christopher's funeral mass was celebrated at Saint Sebastian Church. His second-grade classmates attended and the children's choir sang.

After the mass we went outside to find about 200 students lined up along the driveway, forming an honor guard. It was absolutely beautiful and incredibly quiet.

My biggest fear now is that Christopher will be forgotten. Our pastor, Father Paul, suggested that we could donate a statue. For the past two years I have been working on developing a statue that would keep Christopher's memory alive, and that would also be a statue for all children. After weeks of trying to find a design, I remembered a statue that Sister Helen had given to Christopher when he was in her class.

The statue of a little boy standing in front of his guardian angel. The sculpture was done by Orlando Statuary in Chicago, IL, and the image of Christopher is the exact size and likeness he was when he died. To make the statue (or all children we added a little girl. I chose the model Christopher would have picked to hold hands with, his little sister, Rachel.

The children are in color representing boys and girls in this world, while the angel is in white, representing God's world. The angel has his hands in the children to guide and protect them as is written on the guardian angel prayer on the plaque at the base of the statue. Christopher's guardian angel must have been very powerful.

We were told Chris was going to die when he was three days old, and yet he was guided through many difficult times, and somehow he never lost hope and always had tremendous faith in God. I want to thank Father Paul and everyone at Saint Sebastian's for all the prayers for Christopher and the continued prayers for my family. Thank you for allowing me to donate this statue and for reading Christopher's story.

I hope you will remember Christopher and be inspired by him. Christopher's tenth birthday was on May 7. Remembering his wish to be able to run fast, once again I ran in the Pittsburgh Marathon. This year my wife Maria ran also, as well as 3 of Christopher's aunts, one uncle, and even his grandmother.

The statue is located in St. Sebastian's upper parking lot across from the playground. May your guardian angel continue to watch over you. To read more about Christopher, go to:

<http://rememberus.tripod.com/member/maria/index.html>

Happy Birthday Christopher!

My Darling Angel Christopher, as your 11th birthday nears, all I can say is that I miss you so desperately that I cannot even begin to put it into words.

So many things that are happening here, and I want to have you here as a part of them. If I can't have that, then I just want to be with you now. Your baby brother Mark is growing up to be a lot like you in many boyish ways.

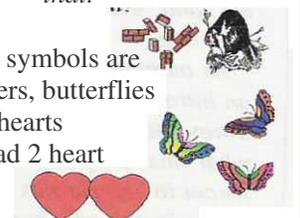
We see so much of you in him. But we realize that he isn't you. Why, oh couldn't we get to see you and Mark grow up together? But having a baby to hold again was wonderful, and I thank you for that beautiful gift. Now Mark isn't a baby anymore... And my arms are empty again, and I am missing you even more. Your "little" sister Rachel has surpassed you, in that she has made her first communion.

And I still keep asking, why couldn't you? And very shortly, Rachel will have outlived you, my dear Christopher, how did that ever come to be? And how do we ever cope with that milestone, when it does get here? Hugs and kisses from Rachel and Mark are so very sweet, but without you, my firstborn, my little buddy, my life will never be complete. This hole in my heart just cannot be filled until you and I are together again, in sweet paradise... Now your daddy has finally finished your "Lego room," and it truly is a beautiful tribute to you. But all I can see is what is missing -- I want so badly to see you with all of your Lego's n there... There are some people who think that we have too many reminders of you

here. I do agree that it is painful at times to see your toys, your clothes, your pictures, and not be able to see you. But I will never get rid of anything that was a part of your life; it would be like losing you all over again. Your things will stay with me until the wonderful day that you and I are reunited. And now again for your birthday this year, your daddy and me and Aunt Jean and Uncle Billy will run fast, well, as fast as we can, in your memory... the one thing you always wished you could do. I just hope so much that you are running fast now, with the angels. And that you will run fast with us too... We all love you, Darling Christopher, and we miss you much more than mere words could ever say. Others keep telling us that you are always with us, but I just want to feel your warm embrace and kiss your soft silky hair and hold you in my arms forever and ever... for my love for you goes beyond forever... From the bottom of our broken hearts, we wish you a happy 11<sup>th</sup> birthday, Angel Christopher.

Written by Maria Faller, with a lot of help from Christopher, I am sure of that!

Christopher's symbols are Lego's, beavers, butterflies and 2 linked hearts because he had 2 heart transplants.



Ralph and Sandy Kelly's son, Jonathan (J.J.) (12-6-75), died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound 11-28-00. Sandy shares J.J. with us:

How do I share with the world the essence of our son? I can tell you that from birth he was my greatest gift, my joy, my sunlight and my comfort. I believed that God has blessed me by just allowing me to be a part of his creation.

J.J., as we called him, was a sensitive, beautiful little boy, everything we wanted in a child. He was bright, good looking, popular, loved others and was loved by others. He often, because of his independent spirit, could be challenging; he was a non conformist

always determined to be master of his own ship. J. J. always wanted to be in control and accepted for who he was. He was a very spiritual young man, always questioning life, often having difficulty with conforming to the rules of society. He felt that God created us to enjoy this life and often couldn't understand why mankind had to pay for what God gave us so freely.

Jonathan was a pure and free spirit, often troubled by the restrictions placed on him. He was strong willed, often going where angels feared to tread He didn't fear death, and he rarely passed judgment on others. He accepted all regardless of the paths they were taking. He loved God and left those judgments to Him.

Often I thought of J.J. as being more of a child of the sixties than my husband and I. There was sort of a flower child atmosphere about him, and yet never have I known an individual with more determination and passion for what he believed his ideals to be. We would talk and, though I didn't always understand his view, I never once felt that he didn't believe in himself and that God was at the very root of his being and was always there watching over him.

As outgoing as he was, Jay was also an introspective young man, well read, always searching for who he was and what his purpose here in life was meant to be. He was a mentor to many of his friends who had problems, he often would advise me. He was an old soul in a young boy looking for a place to be who he thought he was. He was a bright star for many, always a smile and just a joy to my heart.

On November 28, 2000, our son chose to take his life. I say, "chose" because Jonathan was always about making his own choices. He called and left a message for his father and I. There was no difference in his voice. He just wanted to tell us he loved us. Something he often did

It was the second call he made regarding his daughter that caused us concern. By the time we got these messages, Jonathan was dead Knowing my son as I did, I could never understand why he chose this final act. But as I said previously, Jonathan was about making his own choices, not

always a good choice maker, but it was important that the choice be made by him and not someone else.

Though this devastated me, I will learn to accept it because I sincerely believe that it was not his intention to hurt his father, me or any of those who loved him deeply. I chose not to ask why, though often my heart aches and I miss my son terribly and I am tempted to question.

Jonathan's greatest passion was writing rhymes, he dreamed of taking his message to the world as a rap star.

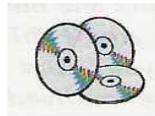
Often I couldn't get past the language so I didn't listen. Since his death I have listened to his words and, yes, he did have a message. He was in his own way trying to address the oppressions he had seen while he walked this earth. He was a good son, good friend and a caring father. And no matter how dark it looked to others he was always ready to sacrifice and be the beacon of light he felt so many needed

Jay would not want us to grieve for him, or feel sorry for him. He would want us to get on with life, not lose hope but carry on in his words "the revolution against oppression." He loved God and believed that God loved him. He chose to be in a better place; his judgment, left up to God

This, my friends, is the essence of one who, no matter how bad days were, brought unspeakable joy to our hearts and hope for a better tomorrow.

We miss him. This was our son, Jonathan.

Jonathan's symbols are music CD's.



Dan and Betty Bryl's daughter, Jessica (1-19-77), died in an auto accident 4-3-00. Jessica's sister, Sarah, shares her Eulogy to Jessica:

If Jessica was here to say good-bye one last time to each of you, I believe this is what she would say:

Although I'm gone from you to see, look in the sky in heaven I'll be. I'll watch you from through the stars; I want you to know I'm not that far. Remember the memories that we share, cherish them, they seem so rare. I know you miss me and your love is true, always remember, I love you too!

Here in Heaven we are one team. I'll be waiting for you, but now I'll be in your dreams. I am watching over you, watching from a star, a world where Angels are. So look up to the sky, when you are barely getting by and I will carry you and all your problems too. So put a smile on your face for I will always watch over you in every way and everywhere I will always be there.

When I look back on all the memories Jessica and I have made together; the thing that stands out the most was that she was always smiling.

I remember Jessica came every day to visit and it didn't matter how much pain I was in, her smile always seemed to ease the pain.

She was constantly there with me thinking of the silliest ways to make me smile. She stayed with me until I fell asleep each night and came back each day with the same smile that eased my pain the day before. She was always doing things to make other peoples' lives happier. She was a genuine kindhearted person who strived each day to be the best person she could be and to give back to others what she had been blessed with.

Jessica was a giving person; the kind of person that expected nothing in return, but only wished she could do more to brighten your day. It didn't matter who you were or what you had, Jessica was not only a sister but also a best friend, and I know many of you feel the same way. Jessica was a shy person, but as you all know, once you got to know her, you knew in your heart that you had a friend for life. And even though she's no longer here in a physical sense, she will always be looking down on us from her new home in the sky.

There were so many things left unsaid and now I am faced with the reality that I will never be able to tell her face to face how much she meant to me. But, if I had the chance to talk to her one last time, "I would tell you that I love you more than I could have ever expressed." I would tell you that, "I have always admired you for the strength you possessed in following your dream of becoming a nurse." I would tell you, "Jessie, thank you for always watching out for me and

protecting me from the pain of life's challenges. But most of all, I would tell you, "thank you for being the best sister a person could ask for."

Betty writes; "I found a poem that expresses the way I feel now that you're not here."

*"You're with me when I'm fast asleep. You know every secret I keep.*

*You're here when I'm awake.*

*You're there when I make a mistake. You're the guardian who stands noble on my shoulder.*

*You wrap me in your love when the world gets colder.*

*I try to be strong and not cry; so, I look up at the clouds and see your smile. Then I know I can go on that extra mile. I look up at the stars in the dark night sky and wonder, are you looking at these same stars?*

*Oh how I long to be with you, lying in your arms.*

*Never before did I think I could miss someone so much.*

*I didn't realize what you meant to me until you were gone.*

*This week I learned how miserable my life would be without you.*

*Are you thinking about me while awry having fun?*

*I haven't stopped thinking about you for a single second.*

*I can't wait for the dry when I see you again.*

*But until that dry Pit have to continue missing you.*

*I cried to God when you died. "Ask Him why." I needed you with me. How could this situation be? You left me with something special though.*

*A memory etched in my mind of you and I'm happy, for your heart so kind.*

*As long as you are happy, that's all Pit ever need. When I go to heaven, "Please be there waiting for me"."*

*I love you, Jessie!*

Betty shares:

*We miss Jessica just so very much. She was such a loving and thoughtful daughter. She was the most*

*giving person and would do anything for anyone. It showed the dry of her memorial down here when 350 people showed up (we're down here in Atlanta by ourselves) and every one of them had something good to say about her. She touched a lot of hearts in her 8 years in Atlanta.*

*We were so very proud of her to go into Pediatric Nursing after Sarah's scoliosis surgery and seeing what they did for her. She loved children and wanted to be a part of others getting better like her sister.*

*Jessica and I were inseparable as we did everything together when she wasn't going to school full time or working with her Dad as a swing manager. Sarah and she were also very close and she misses her tremendously.*

Dan wrote these poems:

*Holidays in Heaven*

*The Holiday Season is just not the same; A smile is missing when crying one name.*

*For parents who've lost a daughter or son, nothing can bring back the delightful fun; of watching them talk, laugh, or just run.*

*The memories are all that we do have now. We do go on, only God knows how.*

*A New Year comes as midnight arrives; our Angels stilt a big part of our lives. If only we could trade the presents we receive, for one more day with those whom we grieve!*

*But nothing can bring back our beloved child, the one that laughed, cried and often smiled.*

*They are together in a much better place, watching us cry, touching our face.*

*Although we miss them on Holidays to share. Be assured their loving presence jilts the air. At home, in church, at New York's Times Square!*

*So celebrating the Holidays are now hard to do, but always remember they are thinking of you too. Wishing you happiness and showing their love, not on this Earth, but from Heaven above!*

*A Piece of Our Heart*

*When I met my wife to be, I knew she was the one for me!*

*I wasn't sure about having a child, not that I was irresponsible or wild! The world just seemed to be a mess, my future, my plans, only a guess. We planned, we married, decided on two, maybe a third, if our plans felt through.*

*I pampered and coached, and watched the birth, no greater moments have I felt on Earth.*

*Like a Flower blooming they unfold, from a mother's warmth to the outside cold.*

*Jessica then Sarah, we did have two, nineteen months apart, but not a clue as to what these tiny ones could do.*

*They both grew and made us proud, one kind of quiet, one really loud.*

*Both easy to pick out of a crowd. Now we have one, the other we lost an accident they cry, at what cost?*

*She left for school that morning, a drive so far.*

*The trip made easier in her red, sun roofed car.*

*A man in a truck stopped her journey that day.*

*A red light ignored, the police did say.*

*Our daughter, our friend, no longer will talk, shop, see a movie or go for a walk. We have pictures and memories, but it's not the same, as seeing her smile after saying her name.*

*A piece of our heart died that day, no matter what is done or what folks say.*

*Our Jessica is gone, far, far awry!*

Jessica's symbols are an open book, cherished teddies and an angel.



Chris and Bonnie Francis' daughter, Chealsey (2-27-97), died 8-6-90. Chealsey's grandparent share the following:

*CHEALSEY KATE FRANCIS, was born Feb. 27, 1997. She died Aug. 6, 1998. She was 17 months and 10 days old. She was our first grand-baby and the first child of our oldest son and our daughter-in-law. Since then they have been blessed with another daughter (2 1/2 years) and their first son (7 months old).*

*When new grandparents join and are introduced to the group, we try to welcome them with our story of how*

*we lost our grandchildren. We encourage them to write to us frequently to share their feelings and difficulties or whenever they need someone to just listen. We don't always have the answers but we care.*

Pam Baker's daughter, Elizabeth (1-2-80), who was a Cumberland College student and loved by every one, died from an acute pulmonary embolism 7-6-01. Pam wrote:

#### A Celebration of the life of Elizabeth Baker

*Whenever I think of my daughter, Elizabeth, there are many things that come to mind. First of all, there was her whole being. Her eyes sparkled, her cheeks glowed red with warmth and kindness, her voice sang with joy and her infectious laughter. She was always ready to welcome the next new friend she had yet to meet and embrace the ones she already had. She was a very busy young lady and being Mom, I was the one responsible for getting her there. In high school, there was the Academic Team, the Advance choir, the Chamber Choir, voice class, the Science Olympiad, the Foreign Language Club (Latin), the National Honor Society, the National Beta Club, tutoring after school, tutoring during school and Fellowship of Christian Athletes to name a few of her extracurricular activities, which kept me busy burning up the road to get her. She was also the football home coming queen, her senior year in high school and, I admit, sometimes I was exasperated, feeling like a private taxi service. Then there were her church activities: Sunday school, Children' Choir, Children's Hand bells, Youth Choir, Youth Hand bells, GA's, Acteens, Youth Missions, World Changers, Vacation Bible School Volunteer. Between her school and church commitments, I often wonder how she found enough hours in the day to be able to graduate sixth in a class of 203, with honors. But she did and her high school graduation was one of the proudest days of my life. She had offers from several schools including a full four year scholarship to Berea, but she chose*

*Cumberland College, a small Baptist college in Williamsburg, Kentucky. She had gone there in her junior and senior years for the Science Olympiad State Competition and had fallen in love with it. The faculty, staff and students there were so kind and made her feel welcome in a Christian atmosphere that she felt compelled to go there. She was convinced that this was the place God had chosen for her and she was right.*

*As you can see, Elizabeth was a VERY BUSY young lady, but she was never too busy for the Lord. She always went to church, not only on Sunday morning and evening, but also Wednesday night and any other occasion when there was an opportunity for sharing Christian fellowship and he, faith. This continued even when she went away to college, when some young people find themselves too busy for the Lord; however, Elizabeth never strayed from the path. She lived the type of Christian life that God wants us all to live and she was happy and had FUN! She had found the inner peace and joy that comes from knowing and loving the Lord and wanted to share it with everyone she came in contact with. That's why she had such an infectious laugh and that sparkle in her eyes. She knew the happiness of her life with the Lord and was generous enough to share it with everyone whether it was with giving testimony, but most importantly, with her daily life. Every day, just through the simple process of living, Elizabeth was an enthusiastic witness for the Lord and no one called her a "Jesus Freak." She was just being Elizabeth.*

*We were all very fortunate to have Elizabeth in our lives for 21 years. She touched many, many lives, whether she knew it or not. But God did. He sent her here so that we could see the wonder and warmth of His Love. And the joy and laughter that comes with it. He brought her Home so that she can be there to meet us with her loving smile and open heart. We were blessed.*

*Pamela D. Baker  
July 11, 2001*

*This was the first time I was really able to talk to someone who had felt my pain and*

*understood how I felt. Here is a copy of my poem to Elizabeth, I hope you like it.*

#### ELIZABETH

*Your sparkling, blue eyes reflected your love of life*

*Your smile radiated the warming glow of your soul.*

*You were a heavenly gift from God, so that we could experience His Love through you.*

*You touched so many lives with grace and beauty, not only of your mortal being, but more importantly, your compassionate soul*

*You never strayed from God's pathway.*

*He allowed us twenty-one years to be blessed with your sweet, loving spirit, to show us the way.*

*Now you've made the final journey to be home with the Father, to welcome us with joyous song and your infectious laughter.*

*We now know that you, Elizabeth, were our "Angel Unaware" and, for too brief a time, we experienced a bit of Heaven on earth.*

*With Loving Hearts and Memories  
Mom, Dad and Sis*

*I know this sounds silly, but if could design a symbol for Elizabeth would represent two of her best features a smiley face musical note. I look forward to talking to you again. You don't know how much you helped me today.*

*Sincerely,  
Pam Baker*

*Elizabeth's symbol is a music note smiley face.*



*Rob and Faye Martin's daughter Lisa Mewbourne (9-23-65), died from a self inflicted gunshot wound 4-22-91. Faye wrote the following*

*My beautiful 25-year old daughter, Lisa, left this earth on April 22, 1991 two days after her husband of three years moved out. Since high school she had struggled with debilitating Diabetes. Over the years other medical problems appeared painful endometriosis, a chipped bone in her*

back that never healed, and other physical problems. Lisa had contracted Diabetes Mellitus at age 17, the worst type of Diabetes.

She was a high school senior when the disease struck. I remember that she grew sicker and sicker and we didn't know what was wrong. When I took her to the doctor, he ran some tests and sent us straight to the hospital. Her blood sugar was 550 and he said she could go into a diabetic coma if it went much higher. I will never forget sitting in his office and weeping. I could not believe this was happening to us. That was the first of many tears for us both. Lisa refused to accept having diabetes. She wanted to be as normal as the other kids. Several times she quit taking her insulin and wound up in the emergency room. This was a brutal disease for a young girl to have.

She married at age 19 and found out very soon that she had made a mistake. He was a lot older than she was, and I think she saw him as a father figure. Never one to procrastinate, she left him after only six months.

After her marriage failed, she told me she wanted to get into sales. She did not go to college; but instead went to work for a computer company. They soon promoted her to inside sales, and she got to know the sales staff and found how much money they made. She saw great big dollar signs! She moved back in with me for six months while she got started in computer supply sales on straight commission. Pretty scary for most twenty year olds, but not this one! She hit the streets running.

Her sales territory was downtown Atlanta and she made dozens of sales calls to companies every day. And they bought from her. Why not? She would waltz into their offices smiling her brilliant smile and looking like some dazzling creature who just stepped out of the pages of Glamour Magazine. She built up a huge number of local accounts, and then tackled the national accounts. They bought, too. There was no stopping her. I was so proud of her. She told me about her plans for the future. She was enrolling in college and planned to major in

marketing. There was a large national company who might hire her for their marketing department, but she needed some college under her belt first. One week after she passed away, her acceptance to the university came in the mail. Her boss told me she would have made \$125,000 that year. She had so much to live for.

She was successful because of her hard work. I was in sales, and since Lisa tended to imitate me. In many ways, she also chose sales. She used to call herself "Little Chip off the Ole Block." Whenever I would scold her for something, she would blink those baby blues at me and say, "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree," reminding me that she was just like ME!

Three years after her first marriage, she remarried. They had a fairy tale wedding with a lavish reception in the Peachtree Plaza Hotel in downtown Atlanta. More mature by now, Lisa was a stunningly beautiful bride. She wore a white satin gown with a deep "V" cut, long lacy sleeves and a long train. At one point during the dancing at her reception, she picked up a young child and whirled around the dance floor with him in her arms.

What a vision! I can still see that scene as though it were yesterday. Her photographer said that on a scale from one to ten, Lisa was "off the charts." And, so she was. Am I allowed to brag about her beauty? I know you will forgive this foolish mother's pride. I used to love just looking at her face, wondering how it was that I could have had such a beautiful child.

After a few years in her second marriage, there was trouble. Her business success outshone her husband's and he had problems with that. Lisa was carrying them financially. But, she was also running up huge credit card debts. (I didn't know this until afterwards.) There were arguments. He called me a lot to talk about their problems. Actually, their problems were much worse than he told me.

Afterwards, Lisa's friend told me that her husband had threatened suicide. He had held a gun to his head and threatened to kill himself in front of her. Lisa was terrified and took a phone into the bathroom and locked the door. She tried to

call his sister. During this time, he left the house with the gun and drove off in his car. His sister was finally able to reach him on his car phone and plead with him to go home. He did, but not until several hours had passed. Lisa was very impressionable. Was he trying to plant the idea of suicide in her head? Would he have preferred that she die rather than leave him?

He moved out on Saturday, April 20, 1991, taking their little dog "Hans" with him. I knew she was upset. I called her Sunday afternoon after church and she was sobbing into the telephone. I got into the car and drove straight to her house. She came to the door disheveled and still in the little pink shorty pajamas she had slept in. She was holding Hans in her arms. It seems her husband had brought the dog back because he missed Lisa and wouldn't stop whining for her.

She was less than pleased to see me. She didn't like to share the things that were going wrong in her life. She closed the front door and headed back to her bed. I was right behind her. She crawled into bed and I crawled in, too. I held her for hours while she sobbed that day. I stayed the night and we talked way into the wee hours. It was a good mother/daughter time. She told me two things that later saved my sanity. She told me that she still loved the Lord and still had a good relationship with Him.

She cried, however, about her lack of a relationship with her dad. She said that he had never loved her and would not even see her now if she didn't contact him first. I tried to reassure her that this was not her fault, and that she was very deserving of love. I told her that her dad did love her, but just wasn't able to show it. I hope she believed me. She then told me that she had always known that I loved her. Two priceless "gifts" from my baby!

She also cried about her deteriorating marriage, saying that she felt she would never have a successful relationship.

The next day, she gave me one of her beautiful outfits, helping me put it on and fussing that I was gaining weight.

We decided to go to the farmer's market. She finished her shopping ahead of me, and the last time I saw my precious angel, my Little Lamb, was in the middle of that market. She came back to me and said she was through and that she was going to leave. She tossed a large frozen pizza into my shopping cart and told me that her brother (who was in college and living with me) would love Harry's pizza. She was giving "gifts" to both her brother and me. Oh, God, if I had only known! She put her arms around me, kissed me lightly on the lips, and said, "I love you, Mom." These were her final words to me.

That evening she went home to an empty house. Her husband had come and taken their dog again! It must have been the final straw, the point where she snapped. One more loss! She called two friends and told them she loved them. She knelt on the floor of her family room, holding a statue of her little dog, and shot herself in the brain stem. The medical examiner told me that Lisa chose a place to die where she was surrounded by dozens of framed photos of the family members she loved. The fact that she was kneeling tells me that my baby was praying to God for forgiveness and asking Him to accept her into His kingdom. And I know that He did. The medical examiner said, mercifully, that her death was instant.

I died with my daughter that day. I wanted to crawl into that dark grave with her. I bargained with God to let me change places with her. I stood at her grave one day in the pouring rain shaking my fist at God and demanding that He send a bolt of lightning to tell me. I was so angry when He didn't. The journey back from my own "death" has been painfully slow; and many are the times that I've beseeched God to take me out of the pain. But, He hasn't, and I can only figure that there must be some reason why I'm here and my child is not.

I will go on and live whatever life the Lord intends for me to live. I will try to honor my baby with everything I do. I will seek ways to keep her alive in the memories of those who loved her. But, I will not shrink from my call when it comes. I willingly accompany the Angel of Death to be with my precious daughter. This life is very short.

I can live it knowingly that I will have

all eternity to be with Lisa and my mother and all those I love. No more sorrow there.

The following poem was written for Lisa by her sister, Denise Lynn Mewbourne:

#### WHAT I MEANT

*I never meant to make springtime  
such an aching lament for you.  
Not that giddy, glowing, glorious time  
when the entire world is new.*

*I never meant to make springtime so  
bitter with unending loss. Filled with  
the echoes of red-brown clay dropped  
onto a grim metal box.*

*Did you know that I grieve for you  
too?*

*Caught up in those treacherous  
mirrors, whose shattered, deceitful  
reflections, tell you this rapture is  
cause for despair.*

*I meant to make the springtime my  
time to enter the angel's dream, to  
soar through the sky blue doorway  
into hillsides soft with promise,  
always green.*

*I wish you could rejoice for me on  
April 23rd, and see how sweet is my  
soul arrayed.*

*With sun-soaked greens and yellows  
and blues draped in satin and lilacs  
and pearls each day.*

*Breathe in the sweet breath of spring!  
In the scent of the velvet roses, I am.  
In the shimmering mists to either side  
of your eyes, I am.*

*In the fragrance of the honeysuckle, I  
am. Ah, could you but see through my  
eyes now you would rejoice for me in  
the spring.*

Faye writes:

Recently, my grief counselor suggested that Lisa write a letter to me. I looked at her like she had lost a marble and asked just how she proposed to have that happen. She told me to get in a quiet place and think about Lisa and to invite her to come to me. Now, I'm not a believer in this kind of thing. I've had several lucid dreams about her, but somehow that seems all right whereas this other stuff sounds rather strange. I said, "What would she say to me?" My counselor answered, "Dear Mom...."

I thought about it a lot and remembered the many, many cards and letters she wrote to me over the course of her lifetime and how loving they all were - all very caring and sweet. So, I think somewhere in my subconscious I decided I wanted this letter, but I was still unsure as how to make it happen.

Then, yesterday morning a friend sent me a musical card that played "The Rose." The words appeared on the screen to accompany the music. It was beautiful! I started to weep as I remembered that Lisa and I had both loved "The Rose" and had cried together through the movie starring Bette Midler. We had forever after loved that song. All of a sudden I knew Lisa was with me. I felt her presence within the deepest part of my being. With the music still playing, I gathered up some of Lisa's things and her picture to place in front of me, and lit a candle. Then I started writing. I filled four handwritten notebook pages before I lifted my hand from the page.

So, to those others who have also lost a precious child, I offer this letter. Please don't judge my intentions in writing it. There is no way I can know if it really was Lisa's spirit writing or if it was an anguished mother's stream-of-consciousness writing. Whatever it was, it was so beautiful that I wanted to share it with you. Let it be to you whatever it will. The month of April being her time of departure was a good time for this to happen. It was so reassuring. One thing you may not understand in it is her statement that she has a baby in heaven. Lisa had a tubal pregnancy (common among Diabetics) and lost the baby. I never thought about this after her death until my soon-to-be-stepdaughter, Melissa, (age 4 yr. at the time), looked up at me and very matter of fact said, "Lisa has a little baby in Heaven." I was astonished at her words, but then remembered the tubal pregnancy! So, I felt that she must indeed have a baby in heaven.

Her letter confirmed this.

So here is my birthday present from Lisa. It is long! My apologies to those of you with differing religious views. I can only write it as it was presented to me, with no additions or corrections.

A Letter from Lisa

"Dear Mom,

*I'm with Grandmother Esther. She helped me so much at first. Comforted me. I came over feeling so lost and so alone. But she loved me and taught me the love of Jesus - what it is really all about. I had forgotten, you see, in*

*dealing with the constant struggles of earth. I wanted to go home - to my real home. I was tired of Diabetes, tired of disappointments, tired of all the struggles. I needed to rest, to sit at Jesus' feet and to learn all the things I could not learn on earth. I needed to be surrounded by love, pure love, God's love. And I needed to be with my baby.*

*I have a baby daughter, Mom. Her name is Esther Faye. She is like the angels, Mom. She is the baby in the seashell in your dream about Heaven, pink and fat and blonde and, oh, Mom, she radiates the love of God She lifts both little arms upward and praises our Lord and Savior. She smiles so sweetly. I hold her tight in my arms and love her with a love that is more precious than love on earth could ever*

*be. I wanted to raise her myself and the Lord is allowing me to do this. I had a lot of learning to do before I was allowed to be with her.*

*Having never lived on the earth, she knows only pure spiritual love. She knows none of the sorrow of earth. She will never be sick and never die.*

*And, Mom, neither will I know. And one day very soon you will be with us.*

*You will romp with us in the flowered meadows of Heaven. You will be my mom and my beloved companion for eternity. I know you have suffered terribly for what I did I ask you, Mom, I beg you, please forgive me and let it go. Give all the pain and misery to*

*Christ and let Him carry it for you. Your little shoulders will never be big enough for such a burden as I've caused you.*

*Please, please forgive me, Mom, and know that I love you now as I've always loved you, with a love and a heart now as pure as spun gold*

*I do have Jocko here, Mom, and Spicer and Chrissy. We have so much fun together. They run and play with Grandmother Esther, Esther Faye and me. Sometimes they ask with their eyes*

*about you, and I tell them soon.. I love you, Mom. We all love you. We all want the best for you and what Is right for you. We want you to be happy there as well as here.*

*Mom, you bring with you here what you are there. Give of yourself, my darling. Give of yourself till there is no more to give and then give some more. Love is all there is, Mom. It is the only way, the only answer. The love of Christ is in us all. We just have to find it. I pray for you, Mom, all the time. I pray for your happiness and for you to find and give love, not perfect love that is only possible where I am. But the love there on earth can teach you and guide you in Heavenly principles. Forgive all those who have ever hurt you, darling Mother. Not to forgive is not to love God Carry no grudges, harbor no anger or ill feelings in your heart. The mom I know and love has a heart too big to let those evils stay for very long. Drive them out, Mom; and let in the love. Let the love flow from me to you. Feel my love, dearest Mother. Feel how my heart yearns for you - yearns to hold you in my arms again and kiss you and be with you forever. Let the love flow then from you to all others --to your husband and to your new daughter, my little sister. Remember, Mom, when I used to tell you I wanted a little sister.*

*Well, through your union with Melissa's father you have given me one. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for little Melissa Ann. Yes, Mom, the answer is yes. You and you alone are meant to be the mother of Melissa. Her own mother was Unworthy. Now you have the hard task of guiding her little footsteps on the road to healing. How do you do that? With love, Mom, with the perfect love of Christ. Be guided with love in all that you do for and with her. She will know when your love for her is pure and God-given. And one day, Mom, Melissa will hold you in Heaven and thank you for being a beacon of light to her, a source of love and life. She can only be healed with love.*

*I am happy now, Mom, with a true happiness I could never have known there. I could only have caused you and others more misery and heartache.*

*To hurt those I loved was unbearable. I only wanted to love you, but those*

*other hateful things kept coming through. Now, I can perfectly love you. Whenever you want to feel my love, just sit quietly with your little stuffed lamb and feel the love of your Little Lamb in Heaven. I will always be with you, Mom. We are never far apart. You have only to ask and I will be there. I will see you through, Mom. Trust in me to do that. I'm strong now. I've learned so much. I can be strong enough for us both. Just lean back, my sweet, and rest in my arms -- and in Jesus' arms. We will not leave you or forsake you. Your heart and my heart beat as one and forever will. I was one with you in the womb and will always be one with you in spirit. Not only did our bodies mesh in the womb, Mom, but so also did our spirits. That is why a mother cannot be comforted when her child "dies." She feels she has lost a part of herself both physically and spiritually. But, honey, it isn't so. The part of you that was me has simply gone on ahead I know that isn't considered right in the earthly mind, but in the Heavenly realm, the spirit that comes is always the "right" spirit. God makes no mistakes, Mom. Never forget that. You have much to look forward to there and to be happy about.*

*Remember the good times we had,*

*Mom. Don't dwell on the bad You and I had some wonderful times together. Remember how we used to laugh together. So many times, Mom. Remember them and think on them. Don't let negative thoughts consume you. Look at my picture and see my smile and hear my laughter. Close your eyes and you will see and hear me. I am never far away. Holy, Mom, our love is holy. It is God-given for eternity. Love your husband, Mom, and submit to him as the Christly head of your home. Let him be the ruler of your heart. Let him see the love in you and not the fear or anger. He, too, can be won with love. He is called of God to do great works on earth. He would be surprised to know how great. He will give hope where there is no hope, love where there is no love. He will be a great warrior for God But, now his tender, hurting spirit must be nourished with love, your love and God's love. He is on a painful journey and he has far to go and much to*

learn. But, learn he will, through God's good graces. He will soften in time and be the husband you want him to be. He loves you dearly and will always love and protect you. Don't blow it, Mom! Stay with him!

Love him for both his faults and his goodness. Appreciate his good qualities. Be a good wife for him; meet his earthly needs and his spiritual needs. You will be a winning team there as well as here. God has much work for you and Rob, both on earth and in Heaven.

I gotta go now, lovely Mother. We can do this again when the time is right for us both. Rest in my love, precious one, and in God's love. I love you all the world and everything in it.

Your daughter forever,  
Lisa, (God's Little Lamb)

The last sentence "I love you all the world and everything in it" was what she used to say to me. And, doesn't it seem that the overall theme of the letter is LOVE? Remember the scripture, "God is love?" He truly must be.

I thank God above for giving me this small glimpse into Heaven, and for the miracle of hearing from my daughter. I pray for His help to show me how to begin a new walk with LOVE.

Faye, Lisa's mom forever  
April 3, 1998

I want to introduce you to the child I birthed and loved. Her name was Lisa Elaine and she was my third and last child; my blue eyed baby girl. The base of her grave marker bears the inscription, "You'll always be my baby, Love, Mom."

This was because I called her "baby," even after she was grown. She would smile brightly and tell me she wasn't a baby anymore. This was my cue to tell her that she would always be my baby. I knew she secretly delighted in being her mama's baby.

When she was a toddler, Santa brought her a little white stuffed lamb. Lisa called the toy, "Wittle Wamb" Like the "Velveteen Rabbit," she dragged the thing 'til it was alive with love. Her nickname became, "Little Lamb," and that stuck

into adulthood. I have many cards, notes and letters from her signed, "Little Lamb." This later took on religious significance for me since Jesus was the "Lamb" of God.

I now think of her as God's very special Little Lamb, cradled safely in His loving arms. Her pink granite grave marker also bears the famous rendering of Christ holding a baby lamb in His arms. I cling to things that lighten my burden even a little.

Lisa's symbol is a lamb.



Nancy Brown's son, Curtis (7-4-75), died from an aneurysm 5-7-99. Nancy writes.

Two years ago my son Curtis died from an aneurysm. He graduated in 1998 from Cumberland College, where he was a communications major (the Communications department has named the Outstanding Senior Award in his honor).

I am attending a class on grief sponsored by Hospice. It has been a most wonderful thing for me. I was told about you and your husband and the loss of your son, and the great things you are doing for other fellow travelers. I am sorry I have not gotten in touch with you sooner.

I am reading the book, **Children of the Dome** that was given to me, and I didn't realize all the years that Curtis went to Cumberland, the significance of the Dome and what you were doing for other grieving parents.

I would like to know what I can do to help you and others who are on this very rough road. One of my goals in going to the hospice class was to find out what good could come out of Curtis's death.

I feel very strongly that there must be something that I can do to help others. I think God is calling me to lead a class at my church. There are several people who have died from aneurysms, and there a lot of people hurting from deaths, not just children, but family members. I guess that Hospice is my way of beginning the process of finding what/how/where I should go next.

If you have any information that would

help me and others I would definitely be interested. I love to read, and have been reading anything I can get my hands on regarding death of children.

Robert Young's daughter, Sarah Kassidy (3-9-98), died from AIDS 3-16-98. Robert "Sam" wrote this poem:

In My Father's House  
A Daddy's Lament

Oh my Juliet, When I held you in my arms, I used to cry. "I Love You," like the sky above and I know that I'll be with you someday soon, after my work is done. On that day that I die.

Cause I know, yes I know that there is a place for us among the many mansions of my Father's House.

And even though today the pain is still so very great, this is not a complaint, nor is it a regret. Because your love helps me with this cross that I must bear "my sweet Juliet."

Oh what earthly treasure would I give? Or rather all my worldly treasures I would give. Seven times around this old world, I'd so gladly seek for nothing more than to hear the sound of your sweet voice and to feel the touch of my finger on your cheek.

But I know, yes, I know that there is a place for us among the many mansions army Father's House.

And even though our time together was far too short, I know that I will not falter and I know that I will not forget and I know that I will love you forever "My Sweet Juliet."

Written for Sarah  
Dedicated to all who know "The Pain"

Ronnie and Jackie Wesley's daughter, Teresa (4-25-68), died as a result of cardiac arrest 10-2-93. Jackie writes:

I have read several of the newsletters so far (rather addicting I might say).

I have 3 children, Teresa who died at the age of 25 of a cardiac arrest in

October 1993. I have 1 son, Doug, age 39, soon to be 40; he lives 2 miles from me, he is my special computer guru. I have a 38-year-old daughter who is a very big help in my computing, she lives in CA, we instant message all the time. I have 6

grandchildren living and 1 grandson who died at birth in 1980, he was born at 26 weeks along and only lived 45 minutes.

I would like for you to visit and see my home page:

My website address is:  
<http://home.talkcity.com/gardenway/buttafly/>

Teresa's memorial:  
<http://www.geocities.com/heartlandihills/5854/though.html>

Anita Harris' son, Davey Duvant (3-31-92), died 6-28-01. Anita talked about Christmas:

*As time goes by Christmas will get harder and harder for me. It will never be the same, without Davey. He used to always help me put the lights on the tree, because Justin was too short to reach around towards the top of the tree. Justin used to help me put the "colored balls" on because he could reach that part. Stormi, she would just pick out her parts of the decorations that she wanted, she runs the house and thinks she always will*

*I was sitting in the living room last night talking to JC (my husband) telling him that I just don't want Christmas to come this year, because I at this point I can't handle it. I know it isn't fair to our kids. I have always wanted to have all my kids Jessie, lil' JC, Stephen, Davey, Justin and Stormi, with me at Christmas, no matter if it was just for a few hours. I will never have that now. I know I have to think of the good things like still getting to have Justin and Stormi here, because the tree that killed Davey could have just as easily killed all three of them. I thank God for what I do have then, I despise Him for taking Davey from me.*

*The day of Davey's funeral, my stepson came to me (lil' JC). As he was fixing to leave to go back to Mississippi with his mom. He walked up to me, hugged me real tight, and said, "Anita, you may not be my real mom, but you are a great mother. I love you and I thank you for taking care of all of us, like you have."*

*Those words coming from him as quite as he is and always have been for the last 8 ½ yrs. I love my step-kids as if they were my own. I would do anything for*

*them and I hope one day they know and understand where I am coming from.*

*"Yes, his symbol is an angel. He is in heaven now, and watching over us. He loved my collection of angels".*

Davey's website address is:  
[http://www.Beliefnet.com/rd.asp?milestoneT ypeID=2&q=20722](http://www.Beliefnet.com/rd.asp?milestoneTypeID=2&q=20722)

Anita shared this letter she sent to friends and family:

*Dear Friends and Family,*

*I have noticed in the past few weeks, I am not hearing from as many of my friends and family, that I did, before June 28, 2001, when my Davey was killed.*

*This tragedy that has happened to me is very painful. I had a woman write to me on November 1, 2001, that caught my attention. My "friend" whom I have that I am talking about, I have never met face-to-face, because she lives in Canada. We talk all the time (or should I say when I get online and feel like talking). Please ... I am asking, don't be afraid to talk to me. My mother-in-law keeps telling me I need my friends in order for me to make it and take care of not only my children but myself, I need my friends and family. I feel, (which I could be wrong) that no one wants to talk to me, because they feel just want attention. That isn't true. I don't want attention, I just want to have a life. I know that people look at me stupid when I say, "I am just waiting on the day for Davey to come through the door again." I know that it isn't going to ever happen, but, I have to believe that.*

*There are times, when I am driving down the road in my car, that I see Davey, I feel him touching my shoulder, I hear him talking to me, I smell his scent. It is just like the other day, I felt him grab my shoulder and made me turn the opposite direction and I couldn't figure out why I took the turn until a few minutes later, I then realized that he did it because there was a wreck ahead (someone had ran a stop sign) and the guy that ran the stop sign had hit the woman broad-sided and it had hurt her very bad, later to find out the woman had died from injuries due to the crash. Davey is my "angel" and I will*

*always believe it. He will be there to guide me through the rest of my life here on earth.*

*There are things going on in my life right now that I haven't shared with anyone, not even my husband (who I am very thankful for having), but I am scared. I don't want to admit to myself I could be sick. I am always being told, that my friends and family will be there for me, sometimes I really wonder. I need you guys just for whatever, I know you will never feel the same rain as I and I as you, but please all I ask is that you always talk to me.*

*Thank you for your time on listening to me jabber on, but I just want you all to sometimes know my feelings. Thank you once again and may Davey bring us closer!!!*

This response was from a friend, It helps all of us better understand how other people feel who do not understand and know what to do:

*The reason I am writing to you now after all this time is to tell you know that since August 30, 2001, when we met praying yahtzee on-line, I have checked your yahoo messenger (and read your messages) and that there is not a day that goes by that you and Davey aren't in my thoughts. I also chose today to write you, because I have seen your last message saying "nobody wants to talk to me, "why"? what have I done?"*

*Dear Anita,*

*It's not that people don't want to talk to you, it's just that (I believe) we're all too afraid too!*

*People are afraid of the "unknown" and to us; the "unknown" is the tragedy that you have endured since the day you lost your son, Davey.*

*What happened to you is the worst thing that could have happened to any other mother and it is very hard for the rest of us to talk about it due to the fear of not knowing the right thing to say! And unfortunately, I am no exception to the rule. I feel angry with myself for not being able to talk to you, because I truly do care about you and your feelings! Please believe me when I say that it is hard also for people around you that love you and also Davey. We too cry, just for different*

reason's than what you do. I personally have shed my share of tears for you and Davey, because I am a mother and because I am human. Your friends and family still love you and Davey too, but they are still trying to cope with what has happened also. Please try to be patient for them also. Let them heal also, so that they can be there for you 100%.

I hope I didn't upset you Anita, I just wanted to let you know that I think of about you and Davey EVERYDAY and that even though I have never met you face to face, I love and care about you also!

Please try to be as strong as you can, if not for yourself, but for your other sweet children! They still need their mommy!

Take good care, Anita and know that every time you put a new message in your yahoo box, I am there smiling for you!

Forever a friend to you now, because of the love of a child... DAVEY!!!  
Sincerely "my friends' name"

Davey's symbol is an angel



Keith and Beverly Owen's daughter, Hayley (8-26-80), was killed in an automobile accident, 8-28-00. This article was written by Thomas Barr, Shepherdsville, KY:

A 20 year old woman died of injuries suffered in a single vehicle accident Monday night on Cedar Grove Road.

Hayley Marie Bridwell, a resident of Light Lane in Cedar Grove, was pronounced dead at the scene at around 11:30 p.m.

According to John Bradley, an accident reconstructionist for the Shepherdsville Police Department, Bridwell was traveling eastbound on Cedar Grove Road when she left the roadway and flipped three times. The vehicle then struck a fence post.

The Chevy Cavalier ended up on its wheels near the entrance of the new industrial park on Cedar Grove Road, just east of Interstate 65.

At this time, Bradley did not have a cause of the accident.

He felt the fog in the area Monday

evening many have contributed to the accident.

Also, Bradley said it appeared that there may have been a change in direction by the vehicle, which may have meant she tried to avoid a deer which may have been crossing the road.

Deputy coroner Morris Proffitt said Bridwell died at the scene of head injuries.

No other vehicles were involved. Bridwell was wearing a seat belt.

Other agencies responding to the scene included Bullitt County EMS, Shepherdsville Volunteer Fire Department and Bullitt County Sheriffs Department.

Bridwell was currently a student at Jefferson Community College and an employee of Humana.

She was a 1998 graduate of Bullitt Central was a member of Beta Club, SADD, Future Business Leaders of America, Pep Club, Lyre Club, Concert Choir and the volleyball squad.

Hayley's symbol is a sunflower.



Lynn O'Bryan's son, Jason (3-21-80), died from muscle and bone cancer 7-26-01. Lynn shares about Jason:

It might help to know how much he accomplished in his short life. He was a great athlete, he was the one that would score the winning touchdown when the score was tie, or hit the run when the bases were loaded.

I would like to tell you a little bit about his illness. Jason was diagnosed with a rare muscle and bone cancer. I would spell it for you, but it's a word I'm trying to forget. He was diagnosed on July 26, 2000. He was having backaches and finally the pain went down to his legs. He had an MRI done on July 26, 2000 and it showed that his primary tumor was on his spine. The tumor had eaten away his L-4 and L-5 vertebrae's, therefore, he immediately had surgery to place a metal rod and screws for support. Jason became paralyzed and the doctors said he would never walk again. You have to know one thing about Jason is that he never gave up and the word NO was not in his vocabulary. By November, Jason was walking with a walker, eventually to a cane. By December he was

walking on his own, the doctor's gave him permission to drive again and even to return to work part-time. In February, after another MRI, Jason was in partial remission. In March, he was so proud to buy his dream vehicle, a 2001 Ford Explorer, which he only got to drive 3 weeks. In April, the pain came back; pretty severe where they had to put the port in his chest for continuous morphine, and it was a nightmare to find out the cancer had come back. In May he was diagnosed with a brain tumor and from then on he was paralyzed again, and was confined to bed which we set up in the family room. He needed a blood transfusion on July 18th and he never left the hospital, he died looking right into my eyes, holding my hand, on July 26, 2001.

I know I have a long way to go & I have a lot to deal with. I love him and miss him so much. I guess you could say he was the son every mother would have loved to have.

In the Messenger-Inquirer, Jim Pickens wrote:

Jason O'Bryan, a two-way star and the co-captain on Owensboro Catholic High School's 1997 Class 2A state runner-up football team, died Thursday at Owensboro Mercy Health System after a long battle with cancer. He was 21.

Nick named "Radar" by his high school football coach, Mojo Hollowell, O'Bryan was a Messenger-Inquirer all Area selection at end on offense and safety on defense as a senior. He also played baseball and basketball at OCHS

"I thought highly of Jason, and he was the kind of kid just about everybody liked," said Owensboro Catholic High principal Harold Staples. "Jason's role on that rotate runner-up) football team was an example of the type of kid he was, hard working and unselfish. He played for the team."

Hollowell, in an interview conducted during O'Bryan's senior season, held a similar opinion of his standout player.

"He's just a winner," Hollowell said of O'Bryan. "He does all the little things well, and you have to have players like that to be a successful football team. He's a tough, hard-nosed kid

who sets a great example for our younger players to follow."

O'Bryan, playing on an injured leg, caught two touchdown passes from quarterback Chad Dickens in the Aces' 39-28 state championship game loss to Bourbon County on a frozen field at Louisville's Cardinal Stadium.

"I'm proud of the way we made a game out of it," a misty-eyed O'Bryan said, moments after Catholic's stirring second-half comeback fell short. "I knew we wouldn't give up. This team never gives up. It's what we're all about. We had opportunities at the end. Things just didn't go our way".

"We gave it our best shot. We can live with it. When all's said and done, everything rests in the hands of the Lord."

A 1998 Catholic High graduate O'Bryan played four seasons of football and was inducted to the Aces Football Hall of Fame this year. A lot of people in the Owensboro Catholic family have been thinking of and praying for Jason's family for a long time," Staples said, "and we will continue to do so."

"Jason was just a super, likable young man. He will be missed by many."

Lynn later wrote:

I have chosen a "football" for Jason's symbol. That was his favorite sport all through high school, and he broke so many records. He loved the game and people remember him for certain plays. I've had a football put on his crypt.

Jason's symbol is a football.



Trevor (11-29-81) is the son of Howard and Bonnie Lowe; he died from an accident 3-5-00. Bonnie wrote:

It was great of you to remember us on Trevor's rebirth day and that is exactly the way we look at it. We do believe that he is in a much better world than we are now. That doesn't stop us from missing him so much our hearts break.

Thank you for your words of kindness and inspiration. This first year has been very difficult. I know that

that some people get. I am so thankful for our friends and family who have stood by us during this first year.

Trevor's symbols are an airplane and a white butterfly.



We recently received the following letter from a classmate and friend of Young Jim's. For a wedding gift, we gave Bryan one of Young Jim's favorite knives. Bryan thrilled us by writing this "thank you" letter to us:

Dear Jim & Dinah,

Thank you so much for the knife; I will treasure it always. Jim was the best friend I've ever had to this day. I often have dreams about Jim, we are usually goofing off or cruising around the 'burg (Williamsburg) trying to pick up girls.

I remember the first time I smoked a cigarette, Jim had some stashed away and we snuck out on the balcony to smoke, I got sick and threw up and Jim kept laughing at me uncontrollably. I remember going down to the farm with Jim, we would fish, ride horses and usually get into stuff

Jim was the greatest; everybody and I mean everybody loved Jim. He always made everybody laugh and smile.

It was truly an honor to be Jim's friend; I still love him to this day and will never forget him. God Bless the both of you and thank you once again for remembering me on my wedding day.

Your Friend Always,  
Bryan

Jim's symbol is a Pegasus.



The following description of the Cherubs and Symbols that are in the Fine Arts Dome which was given by Luther and Rosemary Smith in memory of their two sons, Drew and Jeremiah, was written by the artist, Wayne Taylor, (Class of 1972), for the dedication:

The Fine Arts Dome features cherubs involved in the Arts. Dance, Music, Drama, and the Visual Arts are divided into quadrants with related activities in the

the front row of figures. Backing up the "Arts Angels" is a row of familiar babies from both the original dome at the Cumberland Inn and the chapter illustrations from Rosemary Smith's book, "The Children of the Dome"

The center of the "Music" area appears behind the chandelier as the viewer walks under the dome. The cherub holds a horn in one hand and the lamp of education in the other. She is flanked on the right side by a singing angel reaching for a monarch butterfly.

Next is a stooping angel with a bouquet of pansies in her hand and an orchid in her hair. You might recognize the next pair of boys chasing yellow butterflies as you continue around the circle. Before moving on, try to find a spiked wheel and a crown in the clouds.

The dancers are next in line with a marching pose down front and a scarlet winged dancer in the distance. Near the dancers look for an evergreen shape, a ball and glove, and a football.

Dr. Taylor thought it would be interesting to pose a curious cherub looking over the edge of the clouds down at all of us. This serves to make a connection with the viewer drawing our attention into the "Visual Arts" area.

Many of the subliminal symbols are hidden in this area in addition to the obvious dolphin heart being sculpted, the John Deer tractor being painted, the rainbow and palette, roses, eagle, red bird and blue bird. In the clouds there are a hawk, to the left of the easel painter, a football, basketball, praying hands, and a basketball with wings all built into the composition in shades of blues and white. A fly can be found in two places. On the easel near the cardinal and on one of the sprinkler heads.

Overhead an angel takes movie pictures to represent the media center located within this building, just another form of visual art.

A crawling cherub plays with an airplane while a bending angel looks at the drawing of the Rainbow Cat. In the clouds, look for a heart, a guitar and a UK basketball, as we move

toward the theatrical angels holding comedy and tragedy masks.

Moving on we enter the "Music area again with a happy cherub holding a stringed instrument the "Lute". Inside the sound hole of the lute is the peace sign. On the hair ribbon of the lute player is a ladybug. There is another crown hidden in the clouds in this area. Looking at the harp player we see musical notes displayed on the sheet music that lies before her and an Evergreen Angel on the parchment at her feet. With the back lit rider on the muscular flying horse "Pegasus" we arrive at the point where we began.

The circular dome is the perfect architectural devise for displaying the cherub theme because it gives visual depth and understanding of the direction to heaven and the hope of traveling through the portal overhead to be reunited with those we love. The circular design allows for an unbroken blending of lives and activities in an eternal panoramic view as each scene melts into the next.

The following remarks were made by Mr. Chuck Dupier at the dedication of the new dome. Chuck also spoke at the dedication of the dome in the Cumberland Inn:

The Dedication of the Dome at Grace Crum Rollins Fine Arts Center  
June 2, 2001

Once again we dedicate a dome, which honors your children and all children those who have been prematurely lost and those who are yet on loan to us from God, perhaps for too brief a time. At the dedication of the first dome-the one which graces the lobby of the Cumberland Inn we extended our thanks to Wayne Taylor

(Cumberland College Class of 1972) for his inspired rendering of the inexpressible. Once again, the inexpressible has been expressed by the hand and heart of this artist. Wayne is with us today; and again, we express our heart felt thanks for his labor of love.

This dome and its symbols, which hovers above the lobby of the Grace Crum Rollins Fine Arts Center here at Cumberland College, is our second

tribute to children loved and lost. As in the first dome, the background of blue sky is symbolic of the impenetrable boundary, which separates mortality from immortality, and we can only perceive the shadow of what lies beyond the shadow that will become crystal clear only when we pass through and join the children. In the meantime, we can only gaze upon the cherubs, the clouds, the butterflies, the pansies, the hearts, and the stars and such, and wonder how God will manage to wipe all our tears away and give us eternal peace and happiness in the presence of the heavenly host and all who have gone before us. Only then will faith become sight.

Please permit a moment of theological reflection: Please remember the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 18:14, "It is not your Father's will that the least of these little ones should perish." Let us not charge our losses to God's account. If we do, our grief will never mature into victory, God did not take the children. Blame accidents, disease, carelessness, recklessness, or whatever chaotic occurrence befell them, but don't blame God, because God loves them and God loves us. Even though our faith is in God through the saving power of the Christ, we are not immune from any kind of tragedy. However, it is the unique power of the Christian Faith that we are given by the Grace of God, the strength and the means to turn any tragedy into triumph. All who have preceded us, including the children would urge us to accept the power of this Grace.

Now it is my distinct privilege to join you in dedicating this dome to the memory of all the children.

Following the dedication of the new dome in the Rollins Fine Arts Center at J.I.M.'s Picnic, 2001, "earth" from the farm where Jim trained horses and from Luther and Rosemary Smith's farm was combined with earth brought from New York by Kevin and Anne Byrnes. The earth was then scattered outside of the Fine Arts Building.

A few of the places from which this earth has been gathered are:

Water from the Atlantic Ocean and Rhode Island Inlets (salt ponds; sand from Jones Beach, NY; Montauk (the most eastern part of NY); earth from many children's graves; Brooklyn, NY; Vermont; New Jersey; Dachau Concentration Memorial in Germany; Ireland; campgrounds and playgrounds frequented by families; gardens and flower petals from children's funerals, and ashes from some of our children.

Many parents have collected earth, sand, peat and even water from places that were special to their children and themselves to combine together and return a portion to a place that is still meaningful.

This tradition will continue at J.I.M.'s Picnic, 2002. You are encouraged to bring a very small amount of any earth that you have that is meaningful to you and your family.

#### The Rules of Chocolate (or CHOCOLATE RULES!)

- \* If you have melted chocolate an over your hands, you're eating it too slowly.
- \* Chocolate covered raisins, cherries, orange slices & strawberries all count as fruit, so eat as many as you want.
- \* Diet tip: Eat a chocolate bar before each meal. It'll take the edge off your appetite, and you'll eat less.
- \* If calories are an issue, store your chocolate on top of the fudge. Calories are afraid of heights, and they will jump out of the chocolate to protect themselves.
- \* Chocolate has many preservatives. Preservatives make you look younger. Therefore, you need to eat more chocolate.
- \* I put "Eat chocolate" at the top of my list of things to do each day. That way, at least I'll get one thing done.
- \* If calories are an issue, store your chocolate on top of the fudge. Calories are afraid of heights, and they will jump out of the chocolate to protect themselves.
- \* Money may talk... but Chocolate sings to me and oh what a beautiful sound!

