



M.I.S.S.ing Angels

MISS Foundation

A Sanctuary for Bereaved Families

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Susie's Last Day

by Barbara White



Let me tell you about Susie White. She was born on a beautiful fall day, the sun was shining brightly and it was warm. She gave me fits the last month I was carrying her. Early in September she started to give me signs that she might make her debut early. I had to make several extra trips to the doctor to see if she was on her way or not. Finally, the day arrived when the doctor told me

to go to the hospital tomorrow morning to induce labor. My husband had to work so someone else took me and let me off in the entrance and drove away. So I walked up the walkway to the door carrying my suitcase and admitted myself. Several hours later my husband arrived. When I questioned him as to why he

was so late, he told me he had forgotten what floor the maternity ward was on and he had ended up lost. What a dunce as this was our sixth child born in the same hospital. They hadn't moved the maternity ward!

But now that he was here, I was able to get down to business and delivered a beautiful baby girl. Christen Susan Lynn White was born on Oct. 3, 1968. She came home to a very excited family consisting of one big sister and four big brothers and a set of parents that were very, very happy.

We believed ourselves to be very lucky to have such a healthy, happy family. Susie was a good child. She was mischievous, a tease, and always laughing. She delighted everyone she met. I always described her as a true "love child." Everyone who met her, loved her.

(cont'd on page 2)

Inside this issue:

Susie's Last Day	2
Stressed? <i>cont'd</i>	3
Remembering Tyler	5
MISSing Angels Bill	7
Kids Korner	8
More Kids Korner	9
Baby's Breath	11
Children's Memorials	12
Donations	14
Announcements	18
AZ Peer Contact List	18
Letters to MISS	19
AZ MISS Chapters	23

Stressed and Burned Out?

By Mark Gorkin, "The Stress Doc"

With the New Year, comes a great deal of stress. Some is grief-related, some post-holiday stress. We found a great article by friend, Mark Gorkin:

The Four Stages of Burnout

Years ago, a magical moment whirled me in a mystical web. The path of "academic flash-dancing" consumed me. I succumbed to the "burnout tango." Now let me not just walk the talk, but de-romance the dance: "Burnout is

the gradual process by which a person, in response to prolonged stress and physical, mental and emotional strain, detaches from work and other meaningful relationships. The result is lowered productivity, cynicism, confusion... a feeling of being drained, having nothing more to give." Whether at work or school (or even in a marriage), to prevent it you must get it. To provide a framework both for understanding and, hopefully, inoculating against future burnout, let's begin with "The Stress Doc's Vital Lesson of the Four 'R's":

Take Note:

? MISS Chapters across the country! See page 22 for chapter information

? See Kindness Project on Page 15

? Our hearts go out to the families of these children for their recent losses
Page 13



Susie White

(continued from cover)

(Continued from page 1)

She was one of those special people put on Earth to bring a lot of love and joy into the world. And that is what God did. She was with us for almost four years. Susie was killed 23 days before her fourth birthday. And I try to believe we were very fortunate to have her for the time we did instead of cursing the amount of time we didn't get to keep her. I would like to share Susie's last day.

Susie's Last Day

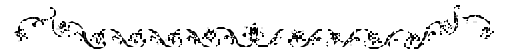
*Oh what a bright and beautiful day
When she bounced down the stairs
to start her day.
My kids are home, no school today.
Hurry up everybody, let's go play.
The first sign of trouble came from the
boys down the street.
Throwing of stones, insult and taunts.
Stay in the yard, away from the danger.
Your Stevie will guard you
and keep you from harm.
A trip to the bakery to bring Mom home.
But a side-trip first to check out a per-
spective new home.
Disappointments greet us*

*and our way is barred.
Susie doesn't care, she played in the
yard.
With two found kittens to tumble and
cuddle and pet.
Untouched once more
by the danger to come.
Home we arrive
and a tantrum is thrown.
A smack on the bottom
that still haunts me so.
Dad's on the couch,
a game he is watching.
So Susie teases and torments to get his
attention.
The evening's a blur cause I went to bed
early.
A cry is heard and I struggle to question,
But I can't wake up so I continue to
slumber.
BOOM, BOOM!!!
What is that noise?
Leap out of bed, awake but confused.
What is that roaring
and where is the light?
The roar is a fire
and it's in Susie's room.
The danger is here
and this time it's fatal.
The danger arrived*

*and no one can guard her.
Swiftly and silently she slipped away
leaving us lost and lonely.
Yes, the danger arrived and no one
could guard her.
Only the angel who took her from us.
Sad and full of despair,
Time doesn't heal nor memories fade.
The ache in my heart still hurts me so.
I look and I listen, but I find you
nowhere.*

By Barbara White

My husband, Susie's father, died on April 13, 2001. He went peacefully in his sleep. When I found him, he had a big smile on his face. Susie came for her Dad. This I know. Thank you for letting me share Susie's last day and the story of her life. I have included a picture of Susie that was taken the day before she was killed. She was so special. Remembering Susie White



Born Oct. 3, 1968
Died Sept. 10, 1972

WHEN CHILDREN DIE

When children die,
they leave behind tears and scars,
but also memories and smiles.

When children die, tears are shed for
healing.
The parents' tears fill oceans, their shed-
ding clears their minds.
The mind then heals, tears become scars
in the soul.
The soul then heals, scars evolve into
memories.
The parents then heal, memories grow
into smiles.
There are no more sincere tears falling
from human eyes
than those shed when a child dies.
Those tears will become memories.
Those tears will bloom into smiles.
Smiles of love.
The scar is the illness,

the alarming diagnosis,
the frightening possibilities,
the endless suffering,
the dreadful disease,
the pain in the soul,
the sadness of the end.

The scars then blossom into memories.
Memories of a happy beginning.
Our beautiful child, a cheerful event,
the handsome expression, the joyful
times,
the pretty hand, the lovely occasions,
the twinkle in the eye, the child's smile,
the bright mind, the family together.
the good-bye kiss.
Memories filled with happiness.
Memories of the child's pretty smile.
Memories of love. Our child's smile.
When children die,
tears are shed,
scars are healed,
memories bloom,
smiles are born.
For every tear shed, as time goes by,

a memory is born,
for every tear shed,
a smile blooms.

It is as if our child is telling us:

"When you remember me, do not cry
anymore;
when you think of me, smile;
tears, yes, but less and less;
and smiles, oh yes, smiles,
forever more and more smiles,
oceans filled with smiles."

Guillermo A. Gutiérrez-Calleros, M.D.
In Memory of Nico



If no matter what you say or what you do, Results, Rewards, Recognition and Relief are not forthcoming, and you can't mean "no" or won't let go...trouble awaits. The groundwork is being laid for apathy, callousness and despair.

Have I captured your attention? Let's examine some of the progressive signs of being caught up in this erosive spiral. Here are **"The Four Stages of Burnout"**:

1. Physical, Mental and Emotional Exhaustion. Maybe you are still holding it together at work (or school). Still, can you relate to this sequence? As soon as you get home, you head for the fridge, get out the Haagen-Dazs or Ben and Jerry's, turn on the tube, collapse on the sofa and you're comatose for the rest of the evening? Doing more with less, having plenty of responsibility but not enough authority, or juggling an unmanageable schedule is taking a toll. (For those grappling with all three stressors...automatically proceed to stage two, if not three.)

Normally, you pride yourself on doing a thorough job, a high quality performance. Now you are looking for shortcuts, if not cutting corners. And this gnaws at your self-esteem. There may even be pangs of guilt. A case of the "brain strain" is developing, accompanied by an energy shortage and feelings of exhaustion. If stress levels continue unabated, you may be ripe for the second stage.

2. Shame and Doubt. Perhaps this scenario is familiar. A supervisor (or professor) asks you to take on a new assignment. You want to...but this voice inside silently screams, "Who are you kidding!" So what's happening? You're not feeling confident about the future; and you're feeling pretty lousy in the present. Not surprisingly, you may even start discounting your past accomplishments. Beware...This is not a logical process; it's a psychological one. Now you wonder if colleagues, friends or family members will detect that something is wrong. While projecting a competent image has been the norm, now

this voice inside is relentlessly shouting, "Impostor!" "Impostor."

And then you catch yourself emitting heavy, labored sighs. (When do people often engage in deep, labored breathing or sighing? Other than when calling those 1-900 numbers. When experiencing a deep sense of loss and change perceived as uncontrollable.) Is chronically grappling with a profound sense of vulnerability or uncertainty anyone's favorite state? Certainly not mine. No surprise then that some folks will "progress" to the third phase: "Cynicism and Callousness."

Are you starting to feel I've been looking in your window? Or, as a reader recently emailed: "Have you been a fly on the wall in my house?" Let's not be premature. We still have two more stages to go. And next, we'll check out your "tude."

3. Cynicism and Callousness. In response to that prolonged feeling of insecurity or vulnerability, some folks feel there's only one thing left to do: put on the heavy armor. They develop an ATTITUDE: "Look out for # 1." "Cover your derriere." "No one's getting to me." And, in the short run, the strategy often works. You become sufficiently abrasive or obnoxious, people start avoiding you. But this hard exterior can eventually become a burdensome, self-defeating strategy.

Here's an example. Years ago, I was leading a workshop at a construction industry conference. There was a guy, I'll call him Joe, who was head of a large plumber's union. Now Joe was basically a down to earth, nice guy...who found himself becoming increasingly bitter, with that hard attitude. And it was scaring him! Now granted, Joe was in a position that pulled him in all directions - compelling demands, favors, complaints, bribes! Still, what do you think was Joe's biggest stress trap? That's right, this "good Joe" was such a "nice guy." What can't nice guys and nice gals do? They can't say "no!." Nor are they confident establishing their boundaries. They have difficulty with authority - being one or interacting with one.

These nice folks tend to avoid conflict; they don't want to hurt others' feelings. They are not comfortable with anger, or don't know how to express their frustration or displeasure in a focused manner. Their personal mantras are being "fair" and "accommodation" (while feeling deep rejection when other's aren't fair or accommodating).

These accommodators, despite having a full workload plate, when asked to take on new work will just smush their peas and bread into the mashed potatoes and allow others to pile on more stuff. Hey, being a team player doesn't mean you have to sacrifice your integrity or health. There's an option: "Sure I'll help you with this new demand and deadline. But for me to give the assignment the attention it deserves, we'll have to renegotiate my priority list and timelines." (I'm not saying there aren't extra-ordinary and emergency situations. But there is a difference between urgent and important. When everything is urgent, nothing is important!) Setting realistic limits is not a negative reflection on your work ethic or your ability to go the extra mile. Without boundaries, that mile often morphs into a marathon. Remember, someone once said: "Burnout is less a sign of failure and more that you gave yourself away."

Joe was really worried. He thought he was going through a split personality process - going from Dr. Jekyll into Hiding. I had to reassure him that there wasn't any genetic transformation occurring. Without realizing it, he had been sucked up by the progressive burnout whirlpool.

And there's another reason for paying attention to this process. Burnout doesn't just facilitate a hardening of the psyche. When your stress starts to smolder into frustration and anger; then turns to suspicion and mistrust as you enclose yourself in embattled armor or a crusty shell...This is not just how you harden an attitude, but it's a formula for hardening the arteries, as well. Cardiovascular complications, high

(cont'd on page 4)

blood pressure, even premature heart attacks can ensue.

Which is why, usually, I'd rather people hit the fourth stage of burnout, than linger in the third. Of course, "Failure, Helplessness and Crisis" sounds terrible. But consider this: "hitting bottom means there's no more downward spiral." And, if you can reach out, there's no where to go but up. Hold on. One more lap to go.

4. Failure, Helplessness and Crisis. Being caught in a familiar "Catch-22" often signals the final phase: "Damned if you do, damned if you don't." "Damned if you stay, damned if you leave." Your coping structure seems to be coming unglued. Next stop...the psychiatric ward! Probably not, however, the crisis smoke signals are billowing big time. Why is that? Burnout is like trying to race a marathon - full speed, nonstop. Can anyone race 26 miles full speed, nonstop? Of course not. Even Olympic marathon runners must pace themselves. If not, the body parts will break down. And with burnout, over time, the mental apparatus also wears out.

In fact, one reason the fourth stage is so disorienting is that a person's psychological defenses have worn down. Cracks start appearing in the defensive armor. Painful memories and old hurts normally contained by your emotional defenses are leaking through the cracks. A slight or an emotional bump can set off an overly sensitive and personal reaction. Now a mate's occasional, somewhat annoying behavior really irritates as it reminds you of a mannerism of your father. Or, jealousy towards a colleague reeks of sibling rivalry.

Double-Edged

Hey, before throwing up your hands, re-

member...burnout is not for wimps. A lot of other folks would have jumped ship much earlier. Many of you reach the farther stages of burnout because of your tenacity and dedication. You have a strong sense of responsibility and don't like being deterred from reaching your goals. All noble qualities...unless compelled by rigid perfectionism and "there's only one right way" thinking. Then, pursuing your goals takes a back seat to proving others wrong and overcoming humiliation. You are chasing (maybe,

...now this voice inside is relentlessly shouting, "Imposter!" "Imposter."

also, being chased by) ego-driven goals. Especially in times of overload, uncertainty and major change, "driven and rigid responsibility" can quickly transform a performance benefit into a personal and professional liability.

Also, these folks are usually not just responsible, they often are quite responsive to others. People lean on them for support. Are you a pillar of strength for those around you? If so, will those dependent upon you be quick to notice when you are feeling shaky? That you may need a shoulder? Often not, as their sense of security is contingent on your always being strong and available. Are you buying into this "super-person" role or hiding behind a heroic mask?

Maybe you always had to help mom with (sometimes raise) the other kids. Or you're the emotional sponge in the office, frequently absorbing your colleagues' complaints. Can you hear that screeching, scratching sound? That's the stress knot twisting and turning tighter and tighter about your neck.

On the Edge

No wonder people start jumping out of jobs or school, out of relationships, sometimes just jumping. And for those not into jumping, you may be into swinging by the fourth stage. Mood swinging, that is, between short highs and/or prolonged depressive lows. Okay, the existential question: Is it Miller Time or Prozac Time? From my perspective, it's way too late for the former (though, clearly, many people disagree with me) and a decision on the latter requires expert opinion. But that's exactly the key for transforming a danger into an opportunity. Fourth stage burnout is the crisis point, it's crunch time. Are you ready to step up to the plate and reach out for the help and resources you need? A person recovers and expands his or her strengths and possibilities through a crisis when: 1) getting proper and sufficient support; someone trained in crisis intervention and loss, 2) confronting denial, false hopes, cynicism or helplessness, 3) grieving past and present losses while turning guilt, hurt, anxiety and aggression into focused energy and 4) acquiring and applying skills and technology for turning new problem-solving options into productive attitudes and actions.

My poetic anthem to burnout and beyond:

*For the phoenix to rise from the ashes
One must know the pain
To transform the fire to burning desire.*

Four Stages of Burnout. Four Steps For Recovery and Rejuvenation. Any readers care to share how you turned a burnout situation into a transformational experience? Can you say, "Creative Burnout"? And will you...Practice Safe Stress?

Next MISS newsletter issue:
Stress Doc's "Top Ten" Stress Tips

"Time has been transformed, and we have changed; it has advanced and set us in motion; it has unveiled its face, inspiring us with bewilderment and exhilaration."

-Kahlil Gibran, "Children of Gods, Scions of Apes"

Remembering Tyler

By Kim Lotz

I remember that horrible day when my world stopped, my heart broke in a single second, and I was told very bluntly and coldly, "Your baby is dead. Do you understand what has happened?" Numbness suddenly surrounded me. I thought it was just a bad dream and that I was going to wake up and everything was going to be okay again.

I turned away from the doctor and nurse refusing to answer their question and looked at my husband. I wanted him to tell me everything was fine and our baby was ok. Instead I saw tears as he sat by my bedside and sobbed. It was clear that *he* had understood what the doctor was telling us.

Our hopes, our dreams, our precious child, the child we wanted so much was dead. Inside I was screaming and crying that this couldn't be happening. Inside I was saying, "No, I don't understand what you're telling me! I won't accept that my baby is dead and that there is nothing that you can do for him!" On the outside I laid motionless and quiet.

On the ultrasound screen was a fully formed little boy, 3 days after his due date, with no heartbeat. With the flick of a switch the ultrasound machine was turned off. My soul screamed to have it turned back on and for them to please do something. Please make his heart start beating again. *Do something!*

My son, Tyler Branden Lotz, was stillborn 24 hours later weighing in at 7 lbs. 8 oz. and measuring 21 inches. We were told Tyler's death was caused by a complication with his umbilical cord. My husband then held the most beautiful child I had ever seen.

Out of fear and deep pain I then made a decision that I will regret the rest of my life, I refused to hold him. I reached out and touched his cute little nose just for a second and wondered again if it was all just a bad dream or if I had died and gone to hell.

The next day I was wheeled out of the hospital with a small green fabric covered box that inside held Tyler's clothes he had worn, a lock of his hair, his footprints, and his pictures. For the first time I realized that this was really happening. I was leaving the hospital without my baby. Tears suddenly began to run down my face and I remember the nurse telling me, "Kim, you're going to be okay!" I wanted to bark at her, "I will NEVER be okay! I wish I was dead!"

Tyler's funeral was 5 days later. All of our friends and family were there. Even 30 of my co-workers showed up to show their support and give their condolences. My husband and I were very touched.

The weeks and months that followed Tyler's death told a different story. I was encouraged to go back to work as soon as possible so that I wouldn't think about my son. Arrghhh, like I could just forget. Friends and family became very uncomfortable with

my mentioning my son and talking about what happened. "He was *just* a baby." "She didn't even know him." "Why can't she get over it?" was how one of my co-workers put it when she thought I wasn't listening. I was shocked at how seemingly very supportive friends and family were so cold and ignorant at the extreme love and grief I had/have for my son.

I felt very alone in my pain. I remember how I often came home from work, turned on a Winnie the Pooh CD we had bought for Tyler, threw myself on the couch, begged God to end my life and sobbed uncontrollably until I vomited. To this day I am mortified at how others who have not walked this path themselves are so quick to put a time limit on another person's grief and suggest how they think you should be doing.

January of 2003 will be seven years since Tyler's death. Friends have become strangers and strangers have become friends. It has taken me many years to find peace and acceptance in Tyler's loss. At times I am still troubled by the fact that I didn't hold and kiss my precious baby boy. However, I am able to now make some peace with that decision because I truly believe Tyler knows his mommy loves and misses him very much everyday.

What has helped me most along my journey of grief was other parents I met over the internet who were going through the loss of their child. The journey of grief is a very thorny trail and I have found nothing helps better than to have someone else's hand to hold and shoulder to cry on – and most importantly someone who understands that love never dies.

A saying that I found on the internet years ago has become our family motto: "We are five in our family. We are six in our family. Five and six at the same time. We have an invisible child that we carry with us that no one sees. Only when you choose to see our invisible child do you know our family."

*Happy 7th Birthday to my would-be 1st grader.
Mommy loves you Tyler*

*Who will tell whether one happy moment of
love or the joy
of breathing or walking on a bright morning
and smelling
the fresh air, is not worth all the suffering and
effort
which life implies?*

--Erich Fromm

"Baby Austin"

The phone rings; your mommy says "Guess what"
Instinctively, I knew; instantly, I loved you.
Suddenly, our lives have changed,
You were in our hearts, right out of the blue.

Time went by slowly as you grew in the womb,
Your mommy and daddy prepared you a room.
Pure bliss and excitement made their hearts gleam,
They read all the books, they were a number one team.

His name is Sebastian, your Mommy would tease,
Your nickname was born,
you might not have been pleased.
Your cousin keeps asking, "Has Sebastian come out,"
I respond with a warm heart, "not yet, just about."

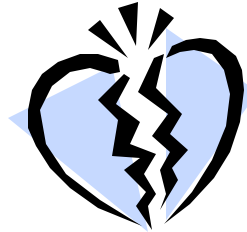
The phone rings; your grandma delivers the news,
I cry out "what happened"! "What happened to you?"
Just yesterday you kicked and filled Mommy with glee,
Today you are silent; how can this be?

This pain is unbearable; I cannot explain,
why I feel such emotion, such heartache and pain.
We have lost you dear Austin and it fills like a dream,
I want to wake up now; my soul wants to scream.

Oh, how must your Mommy and Daddy now feel,
their dreams have been shattered; it's all so surreal.
The burden of sorrow forever their friend,
hearts so deeply broken, impossible to mend.

Our hearts ache for you and the time we won't share,
The birthdays and Christmas; your first teddy bear.
Our dreams of your childhood have just slipped away,
your room is now empty; no tomorrow, no today.

As I sit on this plane, tears well in my eyes,
I gaze into the clouds, God's mystery realized.
How can I accept this; I question Him, WHY?
I'm forced to sit silently,
with no obvious reply.



I'm coming to help bury you,
my sister's sweet child.
In a sea of such sorrow,
so turbulent and wild.

My nephew, we love you and forever
you'll be,

Embedded deep in the hearts of your family.
Our loved ones gone before you, must cradle you now,
I know you were welcomed, I'm comforted somehow.

There is nothing that could have prepared us for this,
How could we have known how much you'd be missed.
Our empty arms ache, are hearts long for you.
Suddenly, our lives have changed, right out of the blue.

*Written by Angie Hecht,
Austin's loving Auntie*



MISSing Angels Bill-Now in New Jersey

by Lorraine Ash, Daily Record

One day last year a high school friend visited Assemblyman Thomas H. Kean Jr., R-Morris. She told him she'd lost her first child, that the child was stillborn, that she hurt because so few people acknowledge her baby existed.

Because of that simple encounter, Kean, son of former Gov. Thomas H. Kean, introduced the Missing Angels Bill, which would offer parents whose child is stillborn the option of getting a Certificate of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth in addition to a Certificate of Fetal Death.

Such bills have been passed in Arizona, Utah, Indiana and Massachusetts, backed by the organizational power of the National Stillbirth Society, founded by stillbirth father Rich Olsen, and The MISS Foundation, founded by stillbirth mother Joanne Cacciatore-Garard.

Both groups have active arms in New Jersey and also are working

for passage of similar bills in Pennsylvania, New York, Florida, Iowa, Washington State, Michigan and Mississippi.

"New Jersey is a link in the chain. More states will start to follow," said Lucy Monahan of Mendham, bereavement counselor for SHARE of North New Jersey, an international perinatal loss support organization. Her son Andrew was stillborn in 1987.

"In the past we parents have turned to bereavement magazines and commercial card producers to have certificates made," she added, "but to have a legal document, I get chills thinking about it. This bill is a credit to the politicians who have embraced stillbirth parents."

Assembly Bill A2335, introduced in May, also is sponsored by Assemblyman Nicholas Asselta, R-Cape May. The measure, which also would make certificates of birth resulting in stillbirth available retroactively, is now in the Assembly's Health & Human Services Committee. Chairwoman Loretta Weinberg, D-

New Jersey MISSING Angels Bill

Bergen, said she hopes to have a meeting on it by year's end. "We are behind in dealing with some serious issues, including this one," Weinberg said.

A2335's sister bill in the Senate, S1771, is sponsored by Sen. James Cafiero, R-Cape May.

Missing Angels bills have met with support in all states approached so far, Cacciatore-Garard said. All, that is, except California, which voted one down earlier this year, partially because of opposition from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists in that state.

That opposition was partially pegged on California ACOG's position that a certificate of birth resulting in stillbirth is medically and scientifically unnecessary and that no document is required to validate a woman's motherhood.

The argument that the certificate is just a piece of paper is one that cuts to the emotional core of the fledgling perinatal and infant loss movement finding its voice in the United States. "No, we don't need a piece of paper to validate our child's life," said Olsen, of the National Stillbirth Society. "But America does. America needs to pause and remember that all our children matter."

Oct. 15 is Infant Loss Remembrance Day and many stillbirth parents will commemorate their deceased children with special memorial walks. While the walks are healing, parents also want to move beyond commemoration. They want research that will stop stillbirths. They also want acknowledgment that they are parents.

Each year, 26,000 American children are stillborn, most for reasons beyond the reach of science. That is almost nine times the number lost to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome or SIDS. Stillbirth parents sympathize deeply with the fate of SIDS babies, even as they long for the same kind of attention.

On Oct. 1, 2001, Lori Donaldson of Rockaway Township delivered her triplets. Her daughters, Ashlyn and Kaylee, were born. Her son, J.R., was stillborn.

"It was a shock to everybody," the 33-year-old mother said. "My doctor was shocked. The perinatologist in the delivery room was shocked. The neonatal people were shocked."

The reason? As far as an autopsy shows, J.R.'s umbilical cord and placenta just didn't look right. He didn't get needed nutrients.

Today, the Donaldson's call the video of one of their pregnancy ultrasounds their home movie of J.R. The couple had a painting made of their son from a photograph taken of him in the hospital; it hangs on a wall in their living room next to the latest picture of J.R.'s sisters. In the picture of the girls is a teddy bear, a symbol of the third triplet.

"My son was born, and as far as a lot of people are concerned, he doesn't exist," Donaldson said.

People who know refer to her daughters as "the twins." Only 20 of the 80 cards she got from well-wishers after the birth mentioned her son.

People who believe life begins at conception act like her son never existed.

People change the subject when she mentions her son's name.

"Part of my closure is talking about my son," Donaldson said. "I can talk about him for hours just from what I know of him being in my uterus and how he used to wrap his feet around my ribs. I love him.

"We baptized my daughters and had a graveside memorial service for J.R. People who attended thanked me for giving them closure, but no one really wants to be a part of mine."

Including the state of New Jersey, according to stillbirth parents. Getting a Certificate of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth if they want one is, for them, important validation that their hopes and dreams, laboring and loving were not in vain. To them, a certificate is acknowledgment that their babies existed, mattered, even though they never breathed the air.

Robert Proto, a stillbirth dad from Upper Saddle River helping to mobilize people to write to Weinberg to get the Missing Angels Bill out of committee, said the certificate is a way the state can help stillbirth parents suffer with dignity.

"Nothing's going to change the insufferable pain. Nothing's going to bring back our children. We know that," he said. "But it's degrading for me to see two original, neat, typed birth certificates, with seals, for my sons, and a photostat of a handwritten fetal death certificate for my daughter. Her name was Alyssa Nicole and the certificate says 'Baby Girl Proto.'"

"My God, how much effort does it take to ask what her name was?"

Assemblyman Kean, leading the legislative charge on the Missing Angels Bill, said passage means emotional validation for New Jersey's stillbirth parents, of which there were 764 in 1998. New Jersey already statutorily defines stillborn children as those who die after 20 weeks' gestation.

The Certificate of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth is a way for the state to recognize them as loved children, Kean explained.

(cont'd on page 10)

"Yes, this is emotional," he said, "and it's practical. Children who